

Platts Heath Primary School

Headcorn Road, Maidstone, ME17 2NH

Inspection dates 14–15 May 2015

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher leads the school with enthusiasm and clear direction. This has resulted in the quality of pupils' learning improving since the previous inspection. The school's effectiveness is now good.
- The quality of teaching is typically good throughout the school. It enables pupils to achieve well and enjoy their learning.
- Pupils have good speaking, listening and reading skills. They reach higher levels than expected by the time they leave.
- Pupils' attainment in writing and mathematics is also rising. Pupils are well prepared to start their next schools.
- Pupils with special educational needs achieve well.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They relate positively to each other and to visitors. They are confident when speaking to adults. Pupils enjoy going to school and say they feel very safe as staff quickly deal with any problems.
- Pupils take their roles on the school council or as eco warriors very seriously.
- Children have a secure and happy start to their education. The outdoor early years learning area has improved. Parents and carers are very positive about the way the school provides for their children.
- Governors give good support. They know the school well and are frequent visitors. They support staff well and rightly set clear expectations that the school can improve further.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- Pupils are not always confident to edit and improve their written work. Work is not consistently presented to a high standard.
- The most able pupils do not always have work matched to their level of abilities so their learning can reach the highest levels.
- Pupils are not fully aware of differing backgrounds and beliefs of others in contrasting areas of their country.

Information about this inspection

- Teaching and learning in six lessons or part lessons were observed by the inspector. Three of these observations took place jointly with the headteacher. In addition, the inspector listened to pupils read from Years 2 and 6. National tests for Year 6 pupils were in progress during part of the inspection.
- The inspector observed the school's work. He looked at a wide range of documents, including safeguarding policies, the school's systems for judging its effectiveness and pupils' past work in their books and on display around the school.
- The inspector met with groups of pupils, school staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and one other member, as well as a representative from the local authority. He also held informal discussions with a number of parents and carers at the start of the school day. Playtimes were also observed.
- In planning and carrying out the inspection, the inspector took account of the 29 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View. He also considered eight questionnaires completed by teaching and support staff. Results from the school's recent parental questionnaire were also considered.

Inspection team

Kevin Hodge, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Platts Heath is much smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported at school action is below average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils who are looked after or known to be eligible for free school meals) is well below average. As there were fewer than five Year 6 pupils eligible last year for funding, their progress is not reported.
- Most pupils are White British. The school has three classes and all have pupils from more than one age group.
- Between January and April this year, the headteacher provided management support to another nearby primary school.
- Reception-age children attend full time and are taught in a mixed-age class with Years 1 and 2 pupils.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in mathematics and English.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop pupils' awareness of others in this country who have contrasting backgrounds or beliefs.
- Improve the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement in the school by:
 - ensuring that teaching helps pupils in Years 1 to 6 to refine and edit their written work to improve it further
 - checking that pupils in Years 1 to 6 present their work carefully, particularly their writing
 - making sure that work set for the most able pupils helps them achieve to the highest level they can.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher successfully nurtures Platts Heath's well-established 'small school' family atmosphere. Pupils' good levels of behaviour and maturity are key strengths. Staff are resoundingly positive about working in the school and this underpins the school's capacity to help teaching improve still further.
- Staff in this small school have many roles and responsibilities that they carry out well. Not all staff have equal responsibilities, but this is being reviewed at the end of term to ensure that further improvements can be tackled more effectively.
- Parents and carers are very supportive of the school and the work it does. Many highlight good communication, pupils' good behaviour and the way staff maintain a 'small school' caring ethos.
- Close links with other local primary and secondary schools enable staff to share expertise and identify ways of improving the quality of teaching. They also provide practical support in developing policies and the expertise of staff.
- Leaders acted promptly to improve provision after weaknesses were highlighted in the previous inspection report. For example, initiatives to improve writing help pupils to write more confidently and creatively. However, leaders and staff acknowledge that pupils need more help to improve their writing even more.
- Good coordination of the work for the small number of pupils with special educational needs means support is put in place quickly. Links made with outside professionals widen the expertise available to help pupils, such as developing their sensory skills.
- Good use is made of the primary sport premium to promote a wider range of sporting opportunities and involvement. The school provides regular swimming lessons for older pupils; links with a local secondary school have helped to develop skills in both pupils and staff alike. These links also help raise activity levels for a greater number of pupils to boost their health, while broadening the range of different sporting activities on offer.
- The school uses the additional pupil premium funding well. Pupils benefit from extra support in class, small groups and one-to-one tuition to ensure they keep pace with others in the school and nationally.
- The headteacher monitors the quality of teaching closely. There are clear expectations about the impact on pupils' learning. Staff know that pay progression links to improved progress of pupils.
- The range of subjects taught, including a whole-school theme, which this year is 'space', ensures that pupils have a well-rounded experience. Initiatives to improve pupils' quality of writing are starting to take effect. In mathematics, activities cover basic number-based topics and problem-solving skills well. Activities for children in the Reception class incorporate all the required areas effectively, despite children sharing resources with older classmates. Children are enjoying using their new outdoor area, although they do not yet fully benefit from a wide range of resources.
- The school has a clear policy for developing British values, including pupils taking part in activities to explore the meaning of democracy, tolerance and principles of right and wrong. For example, pupils were very excited about holding their own mock election to mirror the recent national election. However, while pupils know their local area well, activities set do not always sufficiently extend their knowledge of others in contrasting localities or with different beliefs.
- The local authority provides good support for the school. It enabled the headteacher to gain extra experience when supporting the management of another local primary school. The local authority's accurate evaluation of the school's effectiveness has helped senior leaders gauge the pace of improvement since the previous inspection.
- All staff, supported well by governors, ensure good standards of safeguarding routines. Site security is reviewed regularly. Procedures for checking on staff appointments are thorough and recorded accurately. Staff, pupils and parents and carers receive regular reminders about the potential dangers posed by the internet. Parents and carers agree that levels of behaviour and safety are good.
- Staff, governors and pupils work together well to ensure that all those attending school are treated fairly and equally. Staff and governors tackle any discrimination quickly. This sense of fair play provides a good example for pupils who treat others fairly, demonstrating good levels of respect for everyone.

■ The governance of the school:

The governing body is effective and has successfully tackled issues identified at the previous inspection. Governors have succeeded in supporting the headteacher and staff to improve the school to good levels of effectiveness. Checks on pupils' progress ensure governors are keenly aware of how this compares to that of others locally and nationally. They are regular visitors to the school, both formally and informally. For example, they attended a Christmas lunch in response to letters of invitation from pupils. Their reports about

what they see are informative, but do not always pinpoint the key strengths and weaknesses in what they observe. Governors know how the quality of teaching links with pupils' progress and how the headteacher maintains the quality of teaching performance. Governors use this information effectively to gauge the quality of teaching and then agree pay awards or withhold them. Close links with other local primary and secondary schools are especially helpful in widening expertise for staff.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They are polite, kind and courteous to each other and visitors. Pupils readily recall their favourite things about the school such as everyone knowing each other very well.
- Pupils like the range of responsibilities they have in the school, such as being members of the school council and eco-warriors. They confirmed that relationships between pupils are good. Only occasionally do some pupils find meeting the school's high expectation of good behaviour difficult.
- In lessons and around the school, pupils generally apply themselves willingly and enthusiastically to their work. However, their presentation is not consistently of a high standard, particularly in some written work. Their work is more neatly laid out in mathematics and topic-based activities.
- Parents and carers are quick to point out that the small school atmosphere helps their children to be enthusiastic learners and that pupils are quick to support others if they know that they are having some particular problems. Pupils benefit from secondary school staff providing training in how to be playground activity leaders. Pupils say they enjoy their role in helping extend the activity levels of others. Pupils' attendance is good.
- Pupils are very knowledgeable about others living abroad, often through their work to raise funds for charities overseas. They are also very knowledgeable about their local area and national events such as the recent election, which they re-enacted in the school. Although they are very clear about what is meant by British values, they are not always as knowledgeable about the range of backgrounds and beliefs represented in contrasting British localities.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say that the school deals with any problems about safety or disputes among pupils very quickly. As some said, 'As our school is so small, everyone knows very quickly if someone is not feeling right.'
- Pupils are knowledgeable about how to use the internet and how to keep safe in the local rural surroundings. They know they must not share any details about themselves or their families and are quick to let staff know if they feel any websites are unsuitable. Good welfare and first-aid arrangements ensure that any pupils needing assistance are spotted and helped quickly.
- Site security is good and parents and carers agree that the school takes good measures to ensure that children are as safe as they can be, particularly when walking to the playing fields or local hall. The school also tries hard to make sure that dropping-off and picking-up times are as safe as possible by having an informal one-way system on local roads.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching has improved since the previous inspection and is now typically good throughout the school. The headteacher quickly identified those weaknesses in teaching which needed to be remedied. Visits to lessons and past work seen in pupils' books across the school show that the teaching of literacy and numeracy skills has improved to consistently good levels.
- The teaching of writing has improved throughout the school so that pupils are eager to get their ideas down on paper. Their stories are often creative and interesting. Teachers support those pupils who find writing more difficult, offering additional ways of helping them to come up with ideas about what to write.
- Occasionally, teachers set the most able pupils writing tasks that are too easy for them. Not all pupils are confident to edit, refine or present their work to the highest standards. However, pupils use their skills effectively in other subjects and, for example, when many wrote letters to the governors inviting them to Christmas lunch.
- Pupils read confidently throughout the school as teaching ensures that key skills such as learning letter sounds and combinations (known as phonics) are taught effectively. As a result, pupils read frequently and enthusiastically. The most able readers read difficult and challenging books and those who find reading more difficult are taught how to sound out unfamiliar words.

- Teachers regularly provide pupils with mathematical activities that stretch their thinking. As a result, most pupils confidently work out simple and more difficult number problems. Additional, regular problem-solving activities also give them different ways to use their skills.
- Pupils use their computing and technology skills effectively throughout the school from the youngest in Reception class to those leaving for their new schools later this term. Pupils are taught effectively to use computers in a variety of ways, such as recording their ideas and using programs to boost their skills.
- Teachers work well with skilled teaching assistants to make sure that disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are fully included in, and benefit from, all classroom activities.
- Teachers assess and mark pupils' work regularly. Pupils like the school's system of colour coding to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of their work. They like to have 'tickled pink' comments, but also do not mind having 'green for growth' comments when their teachers spot how their work could get better.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Pupils now make good progress from their different starting points; they achieve well. Results in national tests have varied from year to year due to the low numbers taking the tests. They rose last year at the end of Year 2 and the end of Year 6. They are on track to rise again this year. Past work and current checks on pupils' progress in reading and mathematics indicate that pupils are on course to reach higher than expected levels this year at both key stages.
- Pupils speak clearly and confidently. They are enthusiastic when telling visitors about what they like best in the school and how they make the best use of their small playground and other facilities. Most listen carefully to each other, staff and visitors.
- In mathematics, pupils confidently work out problems, for example, using long division or multiplication. Weekly additional problem-solving activities give them the opportunity to apply their skills in differing situations. For example, past work in Years 5 and 6 indicated that pupils were skilled at working out a variety of ways that different sizes of paving stones could be used to create a patio.
- The most able pupils generally achieve well. This is reflected in their past work since the beginning of the year and in their current progress. For example, a higher proportion of pupils are on track to reach higher levels this year. On occasions, however, their progress slows if they have work that does not sufficiently stretch their thinking. The most able pupils in Year 2 achieve well and are on track to improve upon their results this year.
- A focus on developing pupils' writing has been largely successful in enabling them to write in different ways and at greater length. Words are often spelt accurately and have appropriate full stops, commas and capital letters. Not all pupils, however, are confident in editing or refining their work so that it can be even better.
- The few pupils who are eligible for additional pupil premium funding achieve well, although their specific attainment and rates of progress are not reported, as there were fewer than five pupils eligible for funding last year.
- Pupils read widely and enthusiastically. Many recall favourite authors and can tell you their favourite types of story. Year 1 pupils reached above average levels in the national phonics screening check last year, reflecting their confidence in reading and writing unfamiliar words.
- Those few disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs achieve well. Well-conceived activities and support from outside professionals help these pupils make good progress.
- Reception class children achieve well from their individual starting points, particularly in their social and emotional development. They benefit from being in the same class as older pupils who provide good role models in ways of working. They enjoy playing together and achieve well by gaining early reading and writing skills confidently.
- Pupils achieve particularly well at a variety of sports, such as swimming, netball and taking part in 'skip to be fit' activities.

The early years provision**is good**

- The very small number of children taught in the mixed-age class continue to achieve well from their various starting points. They settle in quickly in the class, benefiting from examples set by older pupils, particularly in following routines and in being attentive to their teacher. They achieve particularly well in their social and emotional development, and generally reach a good level of development by the time they become Year 1 pupils. Being taught in the same mixed-age class means that they have a smooth transition to different ways of working when they become older.
- Teaching has remained good and is effective because it ensures that pupils of differing ages and abilities are catered for well. Teachers also ensure that reception-aged pupils have activities suited to their age and stages of development. However, when all the class recently visited a farm, all children benefited from the joint experience. When discussing their visit, all pupils contributed equally well to discussions about how it felt to have different animals to touch and smell, or to handle a tarantula. All children in the class were also keen to tell the inspector about their new additions to the classroom in the form of recently hatched chicks and the plans to give them names.
- Children behave well. They benefit from having older pupils to help and guide them. Teaching assistants are also quick to point out if any children need support or help in their activities. Teachers provide a good combination of well-planned activities in the classroom and the recently developed outdoor area is proving popular. However, the range of resources is not as extensive as that found within the classroom, which limits the scope of some activities and children's learning. Plans are well in hand to provide additional resources.
- The leader combines her various responsibilities skilfully. She is clear about how the needs of the youngest children in the school are catered for, particularly as they are in a mixed-age class. Relationships with parents and carers are very positive and they talk enthusiastically about how much their children liked their start to the school. Welfare arrangements are clear and teaching assistants are quick to spot any children needing help or who are upset.

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	118295
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	462413

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	59
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Debbie Henderson
Headteacher	Piers Anscomb
Date of previous school inspection	12–13 June 2013
Telephone number	01622 850316
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