

Pilgrims' Way Primary School and Nursery

Pilgrims' Way, Canterbury, Kent CT1 1XU

Inspection dates

13–14 September 2017

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Inadequate
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Inadequate
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- The school continues to undergo considerable turbulence. Pupils leave and join the school at irregular points. The turnover of staff is relentless.
- Leaders struggle to embed and sustain their carefully considered improvements.
- The tireless headteacher is frequently thwarted in her efforts to improve the school due to circumstances beyond her control.
- Pupils' progress and attainment are weak. Teachers' expectations are too low.
- Until recently, the teaching of early reading was not strong enough to ensure that pupils were ready to learn in key stage 1.
- Leaders do not effectively gather, analyse or report information about the progress of particular groups of pupils. This information is not precise or detailed enough.
- There are serious weaknesses in the ways leaders manage the performance and professional learning of staff.
- Weak teaching, including the work of teaching assistants, in all key stages slows the rates at which pupils learn.
- Many pupils have gaps in their knowledge, skills and understanding caused by weak teaching and need to catch up.
- Too many pupils are absent too often.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils treat each other generally with respect, tolerance and care. They play together happily and most are keen to learn, especially in the early years. Staff care for pupils admirably.
- Pupils respond enthusiastically to active opportunities to learn such as those afforded by the well-trained and qualified sports coaches.
- Leaders and the trust have an accurate view of the school's weaknesses. The trust has added additional leadership capacity to the school. This is beginning to have a positive impact in the early years and in curriculum planning.
- A few higher-attaining key stage 1 pupils make good progress in mathematics.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school has serious weaknesses, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Stabilise staffing so that necessary improvements to teaching, learning and assessment can take root.
- Spread the stronger practice in phonics teaching that already exists in the Village Academy Trust to all staff, from the Nursery through to Year 2.
- Continually upgrade teachers' and teaching assistants' skills so that they:
 - use information about what pupils already know, understand and can do to plan teaching at an appropriate but challenging level
 - are helped to evaluate their own practice, through effective performance management, and seek training where necessary
 - use time efficiently in lessons and across the school day.
- Raise attendance overall and reduce persistent absence further by:
 - relentlessly pursuing those strategies that have worked so far with some families whose children do not attend regularly enough
 - using the range of legal measures available to encourage good attendance
 - ensuring that pupils want to come to school because it is an exciting and stimulating place to be.
- Strengthen leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that all leaders are clear about their individual roles
 - enabling the headteacher to concentrate intently on improving the quality of teaching and learning
 - ensuring that the new special educational needs coordinator has up-to-date training and support for her role
 - simplifying information about pupils' and groups of pupils' progress and attainment and making it more precise.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- Leaders' efforts to improve Pilgrims' Way are too often held back by factors beyond their control. Over the past year, the headteacher has had to manage the inclusion of a large number of new pupils. With the support of her staff and the Village Academy Trust, the integration of these pupils has been successful in respect of their welfare.
- Leaders' work to support these pupils' transition to their new school has meant that other aspects of the school's work have not received enough attention. Consequently, standards of teaching have declined. As a result, the emerging improvements in pupils' progress evidenced in the last inspection have not been sustained.
- The headteacher is too often distracted from strategic leadership activities due to issues emerging in the community. She is also constantly involved in trying to recruit good staff or improving the effectiveness of existing team members. The turnover in staffing makes it very difficult for necessary improvements to be sustained over time.
- The performance management of staff lacks rigour. Staff do not routinely have targets to work towards, sometimes because they have not been at the school long enough to have had their professional needs identified. Staff were not able to share examples of how effective training, mentoring or coaching have improved their practice over time.
- There have been recent changes to the leadership of the early years. The new arrangements are promising but at an early stage. Greater cooperation between the on-site Nursery and classes in Reception has already improved this provision.
- Changes to the leadership of the provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are yet to bed down. The new special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) is learning her role and responsibilities, and is receiving support from other senior leaders and the trust to get up to speed. Additional funding to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is not used as effectively as it should be.
- The leadership of teaching has, until recently, been hampered by too few expert practitioners able to share their work or model for their peers how to do things well. The Village Academy Trust is working to rectify this situation by sharing the work of skilled practitioners from across the trust.
- The school's extensive grounds provide rich learning opportunities. While leaders are aware of the need to keep the children safe outside, too few teachers make effective use of the site in their teaching.
- Leaders' plans to use pupil premium funding have improved as a result of the external review of this funding after the last inspection. However, leaders are not clear enough about the impact that this funding is having on improving disadvantaged pupils' outcomes. Disadvantaged pupils still lag behind their classmates in all measures of their performance.
- As part of a whole-trust review of the curriculum, leaders are reorganising teaching. This is to ensure wider coverage of subject areas. It is also designed to enable pupils to deepen their thinking and improve their reasoning. The curriculum implicitly

supports pupils' personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school's work to develop pupils' understanding of equality, diversity, inclusion, democracy and the rule of law is not demonstrated as clearly as it could be across the school.

- Pupils benefit from good opportunities to learn in art and were led skilfully in the learning of a whole-school song. The words of the song reflect the ethos and values of the school. They were written by one of the pupils. This is an example of the great potential in the pupils, which too frequently lies untapped.
- The school's use of the primary physical education and sports premium is highly effective. Skilled and well-qualified coaches lead the pupils through a range of sports and exercise-related activities. Many strengths were observed in these lessons during the inspection, and pupils greatly enjoy them. Regrettably, the report of this work on the website currently does not show how the many benefits of this work will be sustained.
- The headteacher is tireless in her work to ensure that all pupils are happy. Other leaders work closely with families new to the area. The school is providing a number of valuable community resources.
- Leaders' evaluation of the school's weaknesses is accurate. The additional capacity from the trust to support the school's development means that there are emerging improvements, despite the school's serious weaknesses.

Governance of the school

- Governance is organised according to the Village Academy Trust's policies. The trustees delegate some powers to the local school sub-committee. The trustees review the school's work and hold the chief executive officer to account. Governance is being strengthened with the recruitment of personnel with relevant skills and experience.
- Governors are dependent on the headteacher and the chief executive officer for provision of information about the school's performance. Officers of the trust are on site at Pilgrims' Way, although the rationale and impact of their visits are not always clear.
- The trustees ensure that statutory requirements relating to safeguarding are met. They have not ensured that all the statutory information required is on the school's website.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Pupils are safe at the school. Staff take great care to ensure pupils' safety when they are aware of risks. For example, staff manage the challenging behaviour of pupils effectively when it is likely to become dangerous for other pupils. Leaders work with the majority of parents increasingly well and maintain as strong relationships as possible with external agencies.
- The checks leaders make on those wishing to work at or volunteer at the schools are thorough. These checks are stored securely and records maintained carefully. This is an example of stronger management practice at Pilgrims' Way. Leaders also check that all safeguarding training is up to date. This is also the case for the early years, so that appropriate levels of paediatric first aid training are in place and key people know the

signs to look for when a child is at risk.

- Leaders ensure that the site is well maintained and clean. They also ensure that all off-site activities are assessed for risk appropriately. This good practice has not been universally applied to all on-site activities, such as learning activities on the hard-standing areas in the early years.
- Staff provide adequate supervision of the playground and lunch hall during breaks. However, the extensive site, including the upper playground and field, cannot be viewed by supervisors in its entirety, especially when they are supporting or encouraging pupils' play.
- As part of its careful pastoral care, the school provides age-appropriate education about safeguarding with programmes such as the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children's (NSPCC) 'Talk pants and stay safe'. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 spoke clearly about how this was helping them to keep themselves safe. Inspectors did not find younger pupils as confident about how they have been taught to stay safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- Teaching, both over time and currently, is weak. Teachers do not plan lessons that take into account pupils' starting points. They do not use information about what pupils already know, understand and can do, even though this was noted as an area for improvement at the last inspection.
- Teaching and learning are slow paced. Time in lessons is often not used productively.
- Some teachers' subject knowledge requires improvement, especially in mathematics.
- In most classes, everybody does the same work. Some find it too easy and some find it too hard. Consequently, those of middle ability make better progress than others, but few pupils make the progress they need to.
- There is little that excites or inspires pupils. As a result, many drift off task and become restless. This includes the most able. Some of these pupils are particularly skilled in mathematics and could flourish further. However, not enough is expected of them. The pupils' willingness to sing in assembly, aided by their natural joyfulness, is a good indicator that they are keen to learn and participate.
- Mathematics is not taught effectively. The work provided for pupils too often lacks challenge and their time is not well enough planned by teachers. For example, pupils have few opportunities to practise mathematical reasoning, an area in which their skills are weak and which is a core requirement of the national curriculum since 2014.
- The regular arrival of new pupils hampers teachers' creation and use of logical sequences of work. Too often they have to stop, go back and start again for those joining the class. Inevitably, this leads to repetition, slowing of learning and boredom for other pupils. The high levels of effective, individual, pastoral support for pupils is not matched by teachers' planning for pupils' learning.
- Teaching assistants are not well directed. A few make a positive contribution by supporting the preparation of resources or by directly questioning pupils in lessons. Some work positively with small groups of pupils in the many break-out areas around the school. Too often, they wait for instruction, act only when given a specific task or

do not make enough impact on learning. Leaders' restructuring of their work is timely and necessary.

- Pupils are not given enough opportunities to develop their writing. Most teachers know and use the correct technical language and grammar. A few encourage pupils to write at length in English and in other subjects across the curriculum. However, this is not consistent. For example, work in science typically requires only short and simple responses to lists of basic questions. As a result, pupils do not develop age-appropriate scientific knowledge and skills.
- At the time of the inspection, it was too soon in the academic year to judge the quality of the impact of teachers' assessment of pupils' work. The small sample of work seen from the previous year suggests that staff at the time followed the trust's relevant policies.
- Leaders have recently introduced a range of strategies to help pupils catch up on missing reading skills in key stage 2. However, it is too soon to judge their effectiveness.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement. Very few pupils exhibit levels of confidence normally found in pupils at this stage of their education.
- Few pupils take the initiative or exercise natural leadership. There are few opportunities for them to practise or develop these skills.
- Many pupils experience significant challenges in their personal lives. The school is currently trying to gather information about how many of them are young carers. Staff are truly compassionate and respond kindly to any pupils displaying obvious need. The family liaison officer provides a range of services to families as well as signposting them to professional agencies or voluntary organisations.
- The school has well-established practices and procedures for supporting pupils or families in crisis. Many of these help to keep pupils in school.
- Pupils told inspectors that there is some bullying at school, though it has reduced recently. They also told inspectors that they know how to recognise it, what to do if it happens and who to tell when others are being unkind or hurtful.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. This judgement is based on, though not solely, the weak levels of attendance across the school. Levels of persistent absence are too high, particularly for pupils from a few families.
- Leaders' tireless efforts, creative strategies and endless goodwill have not produced the dramatic improvements required to bring attendance levels closer to national averages. There are signs, however, that since September 2016, absence is reducing so that the

gap is closing slowly.

- Teachers' low expectations about what pupils can achieve in lessons limits the range of planned activities. Pupils are not excited enough by teaching, so they lose interest. Pupils often spend long periods sitting on the carpet uncomfortably, become restless and fidget. Some of this fidgeting affects their classmates, whose slow learning is further disrupted.
- The vast majority of pupils comply with the school's behaviour policy. Inspectors found little evidence of serious breakdowns in discipline. Pupils with challenging behaviour are managed well and the leaders have in place appropriate policies for when they need to use tactical handling or restraint.
- Leaders maintain good records of any incidents that do occur and use sanctions judiciously. There has been only one permanent exclusion during the headteacher's time in post.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- Pupils make weak progress and attain low standards. As a result, outcomes are inadequate.
- The proportion of early years children attaining a good level of development in 2017, as moderated within the trust and by representatives of Kent County Council, was below the national average. It was, however, greater than in 2016.
- Far too few pupils attain well in the Year 1 phonics check. At the time of the inspection, leaders were not able easily to provide figures for pupils resitting the phonics check in Year 2. There are too many gaps in the school's understanding of pupils' progress and attainment.
- Pupils in Year 6 in 2016 did not make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. In each of the published measures for the school, performance was below the national average. However, provisional 2017 results in reading were broadly in line with the national average in 2017. This is a sign of improvement and recovering levels of performance.
- Pupils' attainment across each subject does not compare well with results nationally, except that of a small group of pupils with high prior attainment at the end of key stage 1 who achieved very high marks in mathematics at the end of key stage 2. This indicates that pupils are capable of achieving much more, including the most able pupils.
- In every measure, disadvantaged pupils lag behind their classmates. Since attainment and progress are low overall, inevitably the performance of these pupils does not compare well with other pupils nationally.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language generally make equally slow progress and do not attain as well as their peers nationally.
- The quality of teaching over time, as shown in pupils' work, confirms how the weaknesses in these results came about. Pupils have gaps in their knowledge, skills and understanding which are not being filled quickly enough.

- A new system for recording pupils' progress is now in place. It is aligned to a set of age-related expectations which are helping leaders track more carefully each pupil's individual journey. For example, it shows that although the progress of the Year 6 pupils in the last academic year did not compare favourably with other pupils nationally, they did make reasonable progress from their starting points.
- Leaders are unable to show compelling or convincing evidence of the progress or attainment from their starting points of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- Nearly all the staff changed during the summer of 2017. It is too soon to judge if the new team will bring about further necessary improvements, building on some recent success.
- Historically, outcomes in this key stage were not good enough to ensure that pupils were ready for Year 1. In 2017, however, the proportion of children attaining a good level of development was much greater than in 2016. It was closer to the national average.
- There is variable practice across the staff team in Reception. For example, published information shows that the teaching of early reading did not prepare children well enough for the phonics check in Year 1 in 2016. Provisional information about the performance of pupils in 2017 suggests that standards have declined further.
- Though the children are safe, at the time of the inspection there were some aspects of safeguarding that needed to tighten up. These were shared with the school by inspectors. Some children were engaged in potentially hazardous activities and staff were not as vigilant as they should be.
- New leadership of the early years has been put in place by the Village Academy Trust. The new early years foundation stage leader is very experienced and knowledgeable. She understands the importance of improving phonics teaching and is mentoring the newly formed staff team to make the necessary improvements.
- The new leader has begun the process of overhauling all the practice. She has made good progress in joining up the team in the Nursery with the Reception staff. Most notably, she has set clear expectations for judging children's progress. As a result, current assessment practice is much more reliable than was previously the case.
- A programme of home visits is under way for children joining the Nursery in September 2017. This is helping to build secure relationships between parents, key people and the children for whom they care. Parents are increasingly using a software application to communicate with staff. This is aiding staff with forming an accurate picture of what children are already able to do and how they are developing at home as well as in school.
- Children are engaged and enthusiastic. Children in the Nursery have settled into the year well. Children in Reception join in willingly with learning games, dances and rhymes supported with gestures.
- The new leader is working to improve the extensive learning spaces. She has led the

remodelling of the outdoor spaces. These now provide an appropriate set of learning opportunities. There are also many visual clues and prompts intended to support children's speech, language and communication development. The sensory room is now well appointed and suitably resourced. It is yet to be put to good use over time, as early assessment of children's needs is only just starting.

School details

Unique reference number	140345
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10040990

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	323
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Petra Bensted
Headteacher	Alice Witty
Telephone number	01227 760084
Website	www.pilgrims-way.kent.sch.uk
Email address	headteacher@pilgrims-way.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	16–17 November 2016

Information about this school

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about the results achieved by pupils in 2016, how it will make sustainable the benefits derived from its use of the primary physical education and sports premium, and when it intends to review its use of the pupil premium, on its website.
- The school does not comply with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish about the results achieved by pupils in 2016, how it will make sustainable the benefits derived from its use of the primary physical education and sports premium, and when it intends to review its use of the pupil premium, on its website.
- Pilgrims' Way is an average-sized primary school.
- There are fewer girls than boys at the school.
- There are nearly twice as many disadvantaged pupils in the school as found in schools nationally.

- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic households is in the top 40% of all schools nationally.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is also in the top 40% of all schools nationally.
- The proportion of pupils in receipt of support for their special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with a statement or education, health and care plan for their special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average.
- The proportion of pupils who join or leave the school other than at the end of a key stage is well above average. The school has many casual admissions in the middle of the year. A large proportion of such pupils joined the school during the last academic year when their families were relocated from the London Borough of Redbridge.
- The majority of pupils come from households in areas with above-average levels of deprivation.
- Pilgrims' Way Primary School is an academy sponsored by the Village Academy Trust. The trust has recently appointed an advisory headteacher to support the school. She is currently working at least two days a week with the serving headteacher.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was conducted under section 8 no formal designation arrangements due to complaints received by Ofsted. These complaints raised concerns about safeguarding arrangements at the school and the quality of leadership and management. On the first day of the inspection, inspectors were not able to complete all the activities necessary to be assured that pupils are safe at all times. As a result, Her Majesty's Inspector deemed the inspection to be a full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act, 2005. This enabled the team to carry out a full set of inspection activities over two full days.
- Inspectors observed learning in all classes at least twice, including the Nursery. Many of these observations were conducted jointly with senior leaders or advisers from the Village Academy Trust.
- Inspectors met regularly with leaders through the inspection. They also met with representatives of the Village Academy Trust and its chief executive officer. Inspectors met a group of teachers formally and spoke informally to many members of staff as they toured the school.
- The lead inspectors met with parents informally on the first day of inspection to gather their views of the school. On the second day of the inspection, the team inspector conducted a formal meeting with a group of four parents. Inspectors also took account of 36 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's confidential online survey tool.
- Inspectors talked to pupils during lessons. They met with two groups of pupils selected at random.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of the school's documents, particularly those relating to safeguarding and health and safety, reviews of the school's use of the pupil premium funding and information about current pupils' progress and attainment.

Inspection team

Simon Hughes, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Linda Taylor

Ofsted Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2017