

Platts Heath Primary School

Headcorn Road, Platts Heath, Maidstone, Kent ME17 2NH

Inspection dates

22–23 May 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- School leaders and governors have not maintained the quality of education since the last inspection. It has declined over time.
- While current pupils have very recently started to make better progress in English and mathematics, this has not been the case over time, particularly in mathematics in key stage 2. As a result, all groups of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities and the most able, do not do as well as they should.
- The quality of teaching varies, including in the early years, and does not build well enough on what pupils know and can already do, particularly the most able and those who have SEN and/or disabilities.
- Leaders have taken action to improve pupils' levels of attendance, and persistent absence has reduced. Despite this, attendance is not yet good enough.
- The school offers a broad curriculum but it is not well balanced. Leaders have not checked on what is being taught in subjects other than mathematics and English and the progress that pupils make in subjects such as history, geography and religious education (RE). Pupils' spiritual and cultural development are not as strong as their social and moral development.
- Governors have not been effective over time. They have not made good use of information or their knowledge of the school. As a result, they do not hold leaders to account for pupils' progress and outcomes.
- Leaders have not analysed the impact of the steps they have taken to support disadvantaged pupils. Additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities has not been used effectively enough.

The school has the following strengths

- Platts Heath is a friendly, welcoming school where pupils feel at home. Parents and carers speak highly of the headteacher and value the happy and supportive culture the staff have created.
- Pupils generally behave well and enjoy coming to school. They feel safe and are well cared for.
- Recent improvements in the leadership of the school, which are the result of its work with a local federation of schools, along with the appointment of a new executive headteacher, are starting to move the school forward.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes by ensuring that:
 - planned learning better meets the needs of pupils, including those who are most able and those who have SEN and/or disabilities, so that they make good progress
 - teachers fully understand and make good use of a range of assessment information
 - teachers, including in the early years, use observations of learning to better identify and support pupils who are not making good progress
 - early reading skills are systematically taught so that pupils are well equipped to link sounds to letter shapes and thereby develop reading and writing skills
 - pupils make good progress in developing subject-specific knowledge, skills and understanding in a wide range of subjects, such as history, geography and RE.
- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - the school's pupil premium strategy is well implemented and evaluated so that additional funding is used as effectively as possible
 - middle leaders have greater impact on improving teaching and pupils' rates of progress
 - pupils' spiritual and cultural development are as strong as their moral and social development.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Recent changes made following close collaboration between the school and a local federation, as well as the appointment of an executive headteacher, are taking the school in the right direction. However, standards in pupils' reading – including their early reading skills – writing and mathematics have been declining over the last three years. Until very recently, leaders' actions to stem this decline have been ineffective, particularly in mathematics. Recent initiatives are starting to have a positive impact on the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. However, improvements are not yet well embedded in all areas of the school.
- Leaders and governors do not oversee the way that funding for disadvantaged pupils is spent. In particular, they have not stringently evaluated the difference that this funding is making to pupils' learning and outcomes. Recently, leaders and governors have sensibly commissioned a review of how pupil premium funding is spent and its impact. It is too early for recommendations from the review to have been implemented.
- Leaders are now better placed to identify pupils whose progress is not good enough. This is because they have recently implemented a new system for tracking pupils' progress. The previous system for tracking pupils' progress was not effective enough.
- The new executive leadership has effectively enhanced the contribution made by the headteacher, leaders and governors. Existing senior leaders and governors now have a more accurate understanding of what the school does well and where it needs to improve. As a consequence, an ambitious plan for improvement has been put in place but it is in its early stages of implementation.
- Recent actions taken by leaders and teachers are starting to bring about some improvements, particularly in pupils' progress and the quality of teaching, but these are not established in all subjects and classes. The quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' progress are still too variable.
- Staff value the new opportunities that they have to develop their professional skills as a result of working in collaboration with other local schools. Training has been appropriately targeted to address areas of weakness. Teachers also now receive regular and accurate feedback from leaders on the quality of their teaching and their use of assessment information.
- The curriculum is not balanced and leaders have not checked that pupils make good progress in subjects such as history, geography and RE. In addition, the curriculum has not enabled pupils to develop their spiritual and cultural learning as well as their social and moral awareness. However, it has offered pupils a variety of interesting and memorable experiences. For example, older pupils fondly remember a visit to St Edmund's Hall, involving safely handling snakes and other animals.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive and supportive of the school. They value the friendly atmosphere and say that their children thrive. One parent commented, 'We love this school. It feels homely. Teachers care about the children.' Pupils echo this, saying, 'The school has a good feel. All the teachers are friendly and the headteacher is fun.' Parents greatly value the availability of the headteacher, who is often visible at the

beginning and end of the school day. They feel that he knows their children well.

- The local authority has a clear understanding of the quality of education that the school is currently providing and has helped to broker effective support to bring about necessary improvement.

Governance of the school

- There have been significant, positive changes to the composition of the governing body. The restructured governing body values the support it is receiving from the local authority and local federation. Governors now have a clear understanding of their responsibilities and what they need to do better.
- In the past, governors have not sufficiently challenged the school, particularly in relation to pupils' performance. Pupils' progress information has not been easy enough to understand or shared well enough to enable governors to hold the school properly to account. In addition, governors have not made good use of national performance information to question school leaders about pupils' progress and outcomes. They have not paid enough attention to the progress of groups of pupils. The governing body has not been rigorous enough in challenging the school to take action to bring about improved attendance, particularly for those who are persistently absent.
- In recent months, governors have wisely made use of a local leader of governance to review their structures and capacity to support and challenge the school. Together with school leaders, they have also sensibly commissioned a review of pupil premium spending.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have ensured that all recruitment and suitability checks are carried out promptly when they appoint new members of staff. They make sure that the school is a safe and orderly environment in which pupils can learn and play safely. The school is secure and all staff are trained to maintain the safety of pupils throughout the day, including the admittance and supervision of visitors. They know how to look out for changes in pupils' behaviour or mood that might suggest they are at risk. Staff are prompt in referring concerns and the headteacher takes appropriate action and maintains careful records in order to ensure that action is followed up.
- Parents are confident that their children are safe and happy at school and they value their easy access to the headteacher in order to sort out problems.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Staff do not take enough account of pupils' differing starting points when planning tasks that challenge and move pupils' learning on. This is particularly the case for the most able pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities.
- Teachers do not make their expectations or the purposes of lessons clear enough to

pupils in order for them to achieve well. For example, when writing, pupils are not always clear enough about what they should achieve in a lesson.

- Leaders' recent actions have begun to improve the quality of teaching and learning, particularly in English and mathematics, following previously very variable practice. As a result of this variable practice, pupils' progress has been too slow over time. Teachers are not always effective in explaining to pupils how they can improve their work, although this aspect of teaching is improving.
- As a result of strong phonics teaching which is systematically planned, pupils are better at linking sounds to shapes of letters than they were previously. This is helping them in reading and writing.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge in English and mathematics, which enables them to question and probe pupils' understanding well. Their use of precise pronunciation in phonics teaching and the use of subject-specific vocabulary in mathematics help pupils to acquire new skills and express their understanding and ideas accurately.
- Subjects such as history, geography and RE are not taught systematically well. Consequently, pupils do not acquire the skills and understanding that they need to make good progress in areas other than reading, writing and mathematics. The executive headteacher is enhancing the quality of teaching and learning in these subjects by ensuring that teachers are clear about the knowledge, skills and understanding that pupils need in order to progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Leaders have created a friendly, caring and inclusive school culture, in which pupils can feel happy, safe and confident, knowing that, if they have a difficulty, there will be a trusted adult to support them. Pupils are well supervised throughout the school day.
- Pupils have also found visits to the school by outside agencies dealing with different aspects of safety helpful. Older pupils are looking forward to their forthcoming visit to a locally organised interactive safety event.
- Pupils respect each other and there is an atmosphere of mutual tolerance and care on the playground, as well as in classrooms. Older pupils show care for younger ones and everyone knows each other. Pupils are safe from bullying. They know how to stay safe online and are aware of a variety of risks and how to avoid them. They also know how to keep themselves safe in other situations, such as on the roads. They value the headteacher's regular reminders about staying safe outside of school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. The school rules of 'Be safe, be fair, learn and care' are widely respected.
- Until recently, pupils have not attended regularly enough. The school has taken

effective action and, consequently, overall attendance is rising, although it is still below average. Leaders' successful new approaches have also resulted in significant improvements in persistent absence.

- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and behave well in lessons. The vast majority of pupils are proud of the school.
- Pupils conduct themselves well during break and lunch times, playing cooperatively, taking turns and talking to each other over lunch. They take responsibility for ensuring that everyone feels happy and safe at playtimes and have constructed their own rota for games.
- Incidents of bullying are rare and pupils feel confident that, if they occur, they will be tackled by staff.
- Leaders are vigilant in maintaining good behaviour and, when incidents of poor behaviour occur, they take prompt action to ensure that they are not repeated. Leaders rarely exclude pupils but do so when the behaviour of individuals puts the safety of other pupils and adults at risk.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- While the progress rates of current pupils over time have been too variable, in recent months, their rates of progress have accelerated and pupils' attainment is rising. Significantly more pupils are now on track to achieve national expectations in English and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 than at the same time last year. This is as a result of actions taken by leaders to improve the quality of teaching and the use of assessment to improve pupils' learning.
- At the end of key stage 2 over the last two years, the proportions of pupils achieving national expectations in reading, writing and mathematics combined have been too low. Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and the most able pupils have made particularly slow progress, most notably in mathematics.
- As a result of changes made by leaders to phonics teaching, current pupils are making better progress in phonics than previously. For example, pupils have better skills to help them read unfamiliar words. Those who have struggled previously in their reading now enjoy it and are making faster progress. This is because they can confidently apply their skills.
- In key stage 1, pupils have not been supported well enough in their learning. In the past, too few have reached expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Key stage 1 reading attainment has been particularly low. However, the school's progress information shows that this is now improving.
- Pupils do not gain the body of knowledge, skills and understanding required for them to make steady rates of progress in subjects such as history, geography and RE.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- Although there are strengths in the provision, teaching and learning in the early years require improvement. Teachers and their assistants do not make consistently and

sharply focused use of their observations of the children's learning to track their progress and to enable teachers to plan next steps in learning. However, there have been recent improvements, particularly in how staff use questioning to develop learning.

- The proportion of children currently in the Reception class now on track to reach a good level of development has improved compared to last year, although some still have underdeveloped social skills and find it hard to listen to others and work together in small groups. Most children are better prepared for Year 1 than in previous years, although rates of progress across the group are still erratic.
- The leadership of early years is becoming more effective in bringing about improved teaching and tracking of pupils' progress. The curriculum is broad and balanced and provides children with engaging experiences. For the most able, however, some adult-led activities are not quite challenging enough.
- Children's behaviour in Reception is good, although some have not yet developed their social skills as well as others. The majority of children concentrate well on a task. Absence has led to gaps in learning for some.
- The school has successfully supported parents so that they contribute well to their children's early learning. Parents feel very positive about the start that the school provides for their children and they make regular contributions to their children's learning journals.

School details

Unique reference number	118295
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10046392

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	79
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Fiona Reeves
Executive Headteacher	Emma Hickling
Headteacher	Piers Anscomb
Telephone number	01622 850 316
Website	www.platts-heath.kent.sch.uk
Email address	headteacher@platts-heath.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	14–15 May 2015

Information about this school

- Platts Heath is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The school has recently joined the Kingswood, Ulcombe and Leeds and Broomfield federation of schools under an 18-month memorandum of understanding. An executive headteacher was appointed in April to oversee the school.
- The governors have commissioned a review of pupil premium spending and are also reviewing governance arrangements in collaboration with a local leader of governance.
- The school did not meet floor targets in 2017. Floor targets are the government's minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is above the national average.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited all classrooms, sometimes with senior leaders.
- The inspector looked at pupils' work during lessons and spoke to pupils about their learning. The inspector evaluated pupils' work across all subjects, sometimes with school leaders.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, subject leaders, representatives of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. Documents related to governance and local authority reports were reviewed.
- Parents' views were considered through conversations at the end of the school day, through 19 responses to Parent View, the online questionnaire, and through 19 free-text comments.
- The views of staff were considered through the 10 responses to Ofsted's staff survey and through discussions with groups of teachers.
- Pupils' views were heard through talking to pupils around the school and in lessons.
- The inspector considered a range of documents, including leaders' evaluations of the school's effectiveness and development plans. Information relating to pupils' progress, attainment, behaviour and attendance was also evaluated.
- Safeguarding records, case files, concern forms and the school's central record of recruitment checks on staff were reviewed by the inspector.

Inspection team

Peter Wibroe, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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