



Palatine Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 126159
Local Authority West Sussex
Inspection number 293477
Inspection date 13 March 2007
Reporting inspector Mike Kell

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

Type of school	Special	School address	Palatine Road
School category	Community special		Worthing
Age range of pupils	4-11		BN12 6JP
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01903 242835
Number on roll (school)	103	Fax number	01903 700264
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Patricia Peal
		Headteacher	Duncan Clough
Date of previous school inspection	18 June 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school has undergone significant change since the last inspection as a result of the local authority's reorganisation of special schools. With effect from October 2005, Palatine changed from an all-age school for pupils with moderate learning difficulties to a primary school catering for pupils with a much wider range of learning difficulties. The local authority's programme required the construction of a new school and major building works and refurbishment of others, including Palatine. Consequently, in the autumn of 2005 the school was relocated for the duration of the building works. The staff and pupils had only returned to their permanent home two weeks before the inspection began. Consequently, there were still teething problems and some resources could not be seen at the time of the inspection. The new hydrotherapy pool was not in full use and not all information and communication technology (ICT) equipment was fully operational. More change is imminent. Both the headteacher and the deputy will have left the school before the next academic year begins.

There are twice as many boys as there are girls on roll. All the pupils have a statement of special educational need. Approximately a third of the pupils have moderate learning difficulties (MLD) and an equal number have autism. The remaining pupils have severe (SLD) or profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD). The vast majority of pupils have a White British background. A small minority of pupils have a language other than English as their first language. A very few pupils are in public care.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Senior managers and governors have worked extremely successfully with the local authority in planning the new building and managing the transition. They have not been as effective in meeting the challenge of developing the school to meet the needs of its changed population. Palatine is a satisfactory school. Children in the Foundation Stage receive a satisfactory quality of education. The school has satisfactory links with its partners. It has forged a strong relationship with parents and carers, who are very supportive, but there are no inclusion arrangements for pupils to experience mainstream schools.

The pupils make good progress in their personal development. They enjoy school and so they behave well and have good attitudes to their work. They receive a good level of care, guidance and support. The coordinated input of therapists, medical staff and other agencies contributes greatly to the support that the school gives to its pupils and their families.

The pupils' standard of work is exceptionally low compared with national expectations, as a result of the pupils' learning difficulties. Their achievements are satisfactory and they make satisfactory progress from their starting points when they enter the school. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Lessons encourage the pupils' communication skills and personal development well, but limitations in assessment procedures and lesson planning sometimes prevent more rapid progress because they reduce teachers' ability to always provide challenging activities that meet all pupils' needs fully. The curriculum, including that in the Foundation Stage, is satisfactory overall. It is not yet structured and organised in a way which fully matches the needs of all pupils. A range of enrichment activities makes a good contribution to the pupils' learning.

Leadership and management are satisfactory, as is the effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation. Senior managers knew that changes were necessary to meet the challenge of the new school population, but they have not always introduced really effective mechanisms for enabling them to monitor how effective the changes have been. For instance, the school does not regularly moderate the accuracy of the teachers' assessments of the pupils' achievements or compare the relative performances of different groups of pupils.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that there is a more robust cycle for monitoring and evaluating all aspects of the school's work in order to make self-evaluation even more effective.
- Improve the curriculum so that it fully meets the changing needs of all children and pupils, including inclusion opportunities in mainstream schools.
- Assess and record more accurately the pupils' achievements so that all lessons fully meet individual needs.
- Analyse assessment data more thoroughly to compare the relative performance of different groups of pupils.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The nature of the pupils' learning difficulties means that their standard of work remains exceptionally low throughout their time in school. The pupils' achievements are satisfactory, including those of children in the Foundation Stage. These youngest children make good progress in their ability to interact with others. As their communication skills improve, they gain in confidence and become more active learners. Consequently, children with PMLD look at a computer screen when prompted, those with autism respond to an expectation that they will show some independence when changing for physical education, and children with MLD develop early writing skills as they make marks on paper. In some individual lessons, the pupils in Years 1 to 6 make good progress, such as when challenged to construct a simple electrical circuit or to write an invitation to a party.

However, the rate at which the children and pupils learn in individual lessons is not always maintained over time. The pupils do not always make sustained and consistent progress because many teachers do not sufficiently take into account any previous small gains in learning when planning activities. The pupils think that they can do better and would like all learning to be 'fun and exciting'. All pupils have an individual learning plan but the targets are variable in quality and level of challenge. This means that pupils do not always make as much progress as they could.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The school encourages all pupils' personal development well. It is successful in helping its pupils to become more competent communicators and to develop social skills. The pupils concentrate well and stay interested, even if activities sometimes lack challenge. They go to school as often as they can. Attendance is good, with virtually all non-attendance being due to the pupils' medical conditions. The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Friendships, respect and tolerance are evident throughout the school.

The pupils have a good understanding of remaining healthy. They know that fresh food is important and that exercise is beneficial. The pupils' awareness of staying safe is good; for instance, a Year 4 pupil commented that it was dangerous to touch electrical equipment with wet hands. There are satisfactory opportunities for pupils to contribute to the community. They are involved in fund raising, but have few opportunities to have a voice in school decisions. The pupils think that a school council would be a very good idea. The pupils are prepared satisfactorily for their future economic well-being. At times they are given opportunities to work together, while on other occasions teachers encourage them to work independently. Visits improve the pupils' self-confidence in a wider community, but they are not supplemented by opportunities to be included in mainstream schools.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

From the Reception Stage onwards, teachers do much to promote the pupils' personal development. They achieve this by engineering many situations in which the pupils are required to make choices, to express their views and to work with others, although teachers also provide good opportunities for their pupils to develop independent learning. Adults develop very good relationships with their pupils, using praise and encouragement appropriately. They encourage the pupils' communication skills through their use of a good variety of communication methods and they are effective in promoting the pupils' confidence and self-esteem. The pupils follow well-established routines.

Lessons are orderly and the pupils are well managed. However, the activities that teachers provide do not always give their pupils enough challenge. This is because teachers do not routinely identify in their planning precisely what individual pupils or small groups are expected to learn in each lesson. Assessment procedures are not fully effective in giving teachers detailed feedback on the amount of learning that has taken place previously.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Excellent accommodation and very good learning resources support the pupils' learning very well. The school enriches the pupils' learning well through a combination of visits, including a residential visit, and visitors into school. The school recognises that it needs to provide more structured activities at lunchtime and more opportunities for pupils to attend lessons in mainstream schools.

The school organises its curriculum around topics that are of interest to the pupils, such as 'Transport'. The pupils are eagerly anticipating the train journey that forms part of this topic. Long-term plans show how different subjects contribute to the topic being studied, and termly plans extend this detail well. The school knows that it needs to do further work on developing its planning so that there is more continuity as the pupils move from class to class and department to department. The Foundation Stage curriculum is satisfactory but not yet organised in a way that acknowledges fully how the children's learning can be balanced across the six areas of learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school is a very safe and caring community, with all policies and procedures for safeguarding pupils in place and implemented robustly. The school provides a high level of pastoral support and care. Good individual behaviour plans are written for the

small number of pupils with particularly challenging behaviour, and on the few occasions when restraint is needed to defuse a situation, its use is recorded in detail.

Teachers and teaching assistants work well as teams, providing a coordinated approach to meeting their pupils' many and varied needs. They are supported by the range of therapists in school who work effectively with teachers in giving pupils a good platform for learning. Strong partnerships with social services departments ensure that the needs of looked-after children are catered for effectively. Teachers' knowledge of their pupils puts them in a good position to set them challenging personal development targets. They provide good support in helping the pupils to achieve them. In contrast, some teachers are not so well placed to provide their pupils with equally effective academic support and guidance because they do not always make use of assessment information to help pupils to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The school has moved forward satisfactorily since the time of the last inspection. The establishment of the new school has been managed very well. This has resulted in a new building that provides spacious and very well-appointed accommodation of which the pupils, staff and governors can be proud. The headteacher has worked hard and successfully in maintaining stability during the recent turbulent period. However, the school's leaders have sometimes found it difficult to ensure that the school's provision has kept up with the very different needs of the pupils who are now entering the school. There are further improvements to be made, especially with assessment and in the curriculum. The capacity for the school to improve further is satisfactory.

The school's self-evaluation is satisfactory overall but some elements are not yet as good as they could be. For example, teachers carry out annual assessments of their pupils in terms of 'p' scales or National Curriculum levels but this exercise is not supplemented by the input of others who could moderate these judgements. This means that the school may not be entirely certain about the progress of some pupils. The school leaders do not yet make full use of their information on pupils' progress to compare the relative performance of different groups of pupils, such as boys and girls, those in public care or the pupils whose first language is not English.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you very much for the warm welcome that you gave us when we visited your school. We enjoyed the day that we spent with you very much. We have a special thank you for the small group of you who gave up some of your lunchtime to talk to us. You should be proud of your brand new sparkling building.

Palatine is a satisfactory school. It does some things well. The staff take a lot of care of you and they are good at helping you to develop as young people. There are reasonable arrangements for getting you ready for moving to your next school. You go to school as often as you can and behave well when you are there. You are learning a lot about being healthy and staying safe. You like your school a lot and we know that you would like to have a school council so that you can have more say about what goes on.

Your lessons and what you are expected to learn are satisfactory. You make satisfactory progress in your work. The senior teachers are doing alright in the way they run the school. They have ideas about how to make your learning better and we have given them some more suggestions.

- The senior teachers need to make sure that they know how well the school is doing.
- Teachers need to plan more carefully what you are expected to learn in each subject.
- Your teachers should look more closely at what you have already done before giving you new work.
- The senior teachers need to check that all of you are doing as well as you can.

Thank you once again. We wish every one of you lots of luck for the future.