

# Pelham Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	101410
<b>Local Authority</b>	Bexley
<b>Inspection number</b>	307674
<b>Inspection dates</b>	12–13 February 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Carol Worthington

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	381
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Irene Holliss
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Kim Barrett (Acting)
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	24 November 2003
<b>School address</b>	Pelham Road Bexleyheath DA7 4HL
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8303 6556
<b>Fax number</b>	020 8304 3065

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Pelham is a larger than average primary school situated in an area of mixed housing. Most pupils are of White British heritage, with the remainder from a wide mix of backgrounds, including increasing numbers from the enlarged European Community. Most speak English as their first language. The percentage with learning and/or behavioural difficulties is higher than average. The school has a specialist unit for pupils with hearing impairment. Pupil mobility is above that in most schools. The school has faced severe disruption to its leadership over the last few years. The local authority (LA) has allocated a consultant headteacher to the school. A permanent headteacher has been appointed for the start of the summer term.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.

In recent years, the lack of permanent leadership has contributed to a general decline in pupils' standards and achievement. Since the beginning of the current academic year, there is some evidence of improvement in the school's ethos, pupils' skills in reading and the quality of teaching. However, these improvements have not yet had a significant positive impact or secured sustained progress. As a result, standards are too low and underachievement is widespread. Pupils generally enter the school with average abilities. The 2007 tests for eleven-year-olds showed standards to be well below average in English and mathematics, and exceptionally low in science. Standards for seven year olds were below average in reading and mathematics and exceptionally low in writing. Pupils' work and the school's assessment data show that underachievement is still widespread in writing, mathematics and science, but there is some slight improvement in reading throughout the school. This improvement is unevenly spread and is more apparent for younger pupils.

Leadership and management are inadequate, as is the school's capacity for sustained improvement. The acting headteacher has a clear view about how to develop the school, but has been unable to delegate responsibility widely enough. This is because the school's weak record of professional development prior to this academic year resulted in staff needing training before being able to take on management roles confidently. Consequently, leadership at all levels has not been effective in raising achievement. The leadership group has correctly identified areas for improvement, but has no effective systems for measuring the impact of the changes made. Governors are supportive of the school and are aware of the difficulties it has faced. They alerted the local authority to the leadership problems and have been undertaking training to improve their monitoring role.

The school has put into place sound measures to improve teaching and these are starting to make a difference. Teaching and learning are now broadly satisfactory, but there is not enough consistently good teaching to bring about the rapid progress necessary to overcome past underachievement.

Pupils receive good pastoral care. In the hearing impaired unit, the outstanding preparation and guidance pupils receive enables them to be fully included in lessons and the general life of the school. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Their attendance is well below average.

Some parents expressed anxiety about bullying, but most pupils say they feel safe and any bullying is dealt with effectively. The behaviour of most pupils is satisfactory but there remain disruptions to learning by a few pupils. Pupils keep fit and healthy through wise food choices and participation in active sports. They take effective safety precautions in practical lessons such as science. There are satisfactory opportunities for pupils to take on responsibility as monitors. Some become house captains, play leaders, or serve on the school council. The eco-group actively leads the school in recycling waste.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 4

Current assessments show that children start the Foundation Stage with skills and understanding similar to those expected for children of that age but do not make enough progress by the end. Provision in the Nursery class is satisfactory, with strengths in the promotion of speaking and listening and excellent relationships between staff and children. The caring relationships help pupils to settle and personal development is satisfactory. In Reception, recent improvements in letter and sound work aid better reading and writing, but children have too few opportunities to develop their writing. In mathematical development, children learn basic counting skills, but activities do not promote early calculations well enough. The small size of the adjoining outside area for Reception children hampers the promotion of a totally integrated curriculum, so they have limited opportunities to explore the world around them. Standards in Reception are beginning to improve but remain below average. The past low performance at the end of the Foundation Stage has improved enough, to prepare children as well as possible for life in Year 1.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in English, mathematics and science.
- Ensure that teaching consistently challenges pupils to achieve as well as they can.
- Improve leadership and management by making leaders at all levels accountable for standards and achievement.
- Work with parents to improve attendance.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 4

Pupils' achievement is inadequate. In recent years, the school's performance in national tests has fluctuated, but has remained below average. Pupils have made unsatisfactory and often poor progress. They did not reach the standards of which they were capable. Pupils' work and the school's assessment data show that underachievement is still widespread. Pupils in the hearing-impaired unit make outstanding progress in developing communication skills, through the excellent support they receive. Pupils with learning difficulties make better progress in English than in mathematics and science, but still underachieve. Pupils' skills in information and communication technology are much better developed than those of literacy and numeracy, particularly for older pupils.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 3

Pupils' social development is good. They are happy, and socialise with each other well. Pupils enjoy active sport; dance is particularly popular with both boys and girls. They are proud of the school's 'golden apple' Healthy School award. The school council is lively and feels that its voice is heard. The school choir raises money to support a local hospice and pupils visit in the local community. Although pupils say they enjoy school, they do not express enjoyment of learning in other ways. Attendance remains well below average, though there has been improvement in the current year. The school has many children with significant medical problems who genuinely need time off school. Older pupils enjoy the opportunities to learn in the specialist facilities of their secondary school, which prepares them for the transition. They transfer with

weak basic skills in literacy and numeracy, which means that their preparation for secondary education and the world beyond is inadequate.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Leadership disruption has had a negative impact on the consistency of teaching. The current programme of lesson observations, coaching and training is starting to be effective. The school's monitoring records show that teaching has improved since the beginning of this academic year and is now satisfactory. There is evidence of some good teaching and learning in most years, but it is not sufficient to ensure pupils quickly make up lost ground. Training in the new primary strategy is helping to raise the quality of teaching and teachers are beginning to consider pupils' learning styles, in order to improve their progress. Teachers are using new accurate assessments to move pupils on to the next stage in their learning, but they are not yet introducing more challenging individual targets effectively enough to help pupils progress quickly. Teachers have planned 'catch-up' sessions effectively so that pupils have a greater chance of meeting their end of year targets. In year 6 these are, however, not ambitious enough and reflect the low expectations of the past.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

The majority of pupils enjoy enrichment activities and clubs, particularly in music, sport and caring for the environment. The school's work on national initiatives is resulting in a more practical curriculum focus, which pupils enjoy. Gaps in mathematics and science knowledge have been identified but the development of higher-level skills in these subjects is not given enough emphasis to challenge the most able. The curriculum is modified really well for the pupils with hearing impairment by the use of visual materials and individual tuition.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 3**

Pastoral care for pupils is good. They feel safe, and the school has secure practices in place to safeguard pupils. The pupils like their teachers, and say that they are kind and attentive. The care and support given to pupils in the hearing unit is outstanding. Pupils say marking is helpful and makes them aware of what they have to do to improve. They often work on these improvements and corrections in 'early morning' work time. Inspectors found this to be inconsistent between classes. Older pupils have specific targets and sound guidance for improvement in English and mathematics, but rarely in science. Pupils with learning difficulties have better support and guidance for literacy; they make better progress in reading than in mathematics or science. Systems for encouraging good attendance are not effective enough and the number of pupils attending regularly is not increasing rapidly enough.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 4

The acting headteacher is committed to improvement and ensures that the school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis. Leaders at all levels are very keen to see improvement and since the start of the current academic year, their leadership skills have begun to develop rapidly through intensive training. The local authority and support consultant headteacher have more recently provided helpful guidance. There are indications that improvement is starting to take place, but it is not yet consistent, nor sustained in its impact on pupils' achievements. School self-evaluation is satisfactory. Staff know and are realistic about the school's strengths and weaknesses. The decline in standards has been apparent to staff, governors and some parents for some time but action taken only dates from the beginning of the current academic year. Targets to improve standards are set, but they are not challenging enough, especially in mathematics and for higher attaining pupils.

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## Annex A

## 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?	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	4
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	4

### Achievement and standards

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

### Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	4
The behaviour of learners	3
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	4

### 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?	3

<sup>1</sup> 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.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	4
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	4
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
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?	Yes
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

28 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Pelham Primary School, Bexleyheath, DA7 4HL

Thank you all for being so welcoming on our recent visit to your school. Many of you told us about the things you particularly enjoy, and how well you think you are doing. We found this very helpful in coming to our decisions.

Your school has been going through a few difficulties and standards have been slipping. Your 'SATs' test results in English, mathematics and science are too low and many of you are not achieving as well as you should. We have asked the school to improve these. Your acting headteacher and school leaders have made some improvements already, but we want the whole school community to help your headteacher to make the school better.

We think more help is needed to continue the improvements, so that all of you benefit and do as well as you should. We have decided your school needs special measures. This means that your school leaders and teachers will get a lot of extra help to improve the school quickly.

You and your parents can also help by improving your attendance. Make sure you don't stay away from school for trivial reasons, and work hard when you are in school. This will help you to enjoy learning as well as being in school with your friends, which you told us you like.

We wish you all well in your life at this school and beyond. Keep up the good work with your recycling!

Yours sincerely

Carol Worthington

Lead Inspector