

Pratts Bottom Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101617
Local Authority	Bromley
Inspection number	307758
Inspection dates	30 April –1 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Graham Lee

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	53
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Peter Hudson OBE
Headteacher	Mrs Janice Box
Date of previous school inspection	22 November 2004
School address	Hookwood Road Pratts Bottom Orpington BR6 7NX
Telephone number	01959 532225
Fax number	01959 532225

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a very small village school serving a mixed community. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties, including those with statements of special education need, is much higher than average. These pupils have a range of moderate learning needs and physical disabilities. The proportion joining or leaving the school at other than the usual times is also higher than is typical of most schools.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Pratts Bottom is a good school. At the heart of its work is a caring and nurturing environment where every child really does matter. In consequence, pupils' personal development is outstanding. They feel very safe, become confident learners, take good care of one another and enjoy all that school has to offer. They are unfailingly friendly and polite. This is recognised by the overwhelming majority of parents, who hold the school in high regard. Typical of their responses was, 'The children respect the staff and each other; it really is a large family atmosphere.' At the same time, the highly effective leadership of the headteacher, ably supported by a committed staff and governing body, has brought about considerable improvements in pupils' academic achievement this year. Pupils now achieve well whatever their ability. Again, this is acknowledged by parents, and one commented, 'My daughter has enjoyed every moment of her school life and has achieved much success.'

Inevitably, standards fluctuate from year to year because of the very small numbers involved. They are broadly average over time and are influenced considerably by the significant numbers of pupils with learning difficulties in most year groups and relatively high levels of pupil mobility. Whilst these groups are well supported and make good progress from their starting points, they do not always reach the expectations for their age. In the 2007 national tests, the achievement of pupils in Year 6 was satisfactory from where they began in the juniors. Whilst they did well in reading and science, a few did not achieve as well as they should have done in writing and mathematics. In writing, throughout the school very few of the most able writers were working at the higher levels of attainment. As a result of consistently good teaching and learning, and strategies introduced by staff, pupils are now achieving very well in mathematics. Progress has also improved in writing, and underachievement has been largely eradicated, although some of the most able pupils, in particular, could still be achieving more.

A significant factor in pupils' improved achievement is the better use of data to track their progress. This is helping staff to identify potential underachievement at an earlier stage and to provide additional support where it is needed. However, this system is at an early stage of development and is not yet firmly enough embedded to enable teachers to consistently set challenging targets for every pupil. A major feature of the school is its 'ethos of inclusion', as one parent put it. It provides a warm welcome for vulnerable children and this is illustrated by the very effective support provided for pupils with learning difficulties and with physical disabilities. A significant number of parents praised the school's work in this area. The school works extremely effectively with parents and a range of outside agencies to meet the needs of these pupils and to ensure that they make good progress.

The curriculum is enriched considerably through a diverse range of additional activities, visits and visitors and whole-school themes such as 'healthy living' and 'that's entertainment'. A sports coach adds another dimension to the provision. All of these activities contribute significantly to pupils' creativity and enjoyment of their education as well as their excellent understanding of the need to adopt a healthy lifestyle. The school is now extremely well resourced for information and communication technology (ICT) and this is being used with increasing effect to promote pupils' learning in other subjects. The headteacher is ensuring that the school plays an increasingly prominent role in village life and promotes community cohesion very effectively.

The school knows its strengths well and tackles any weaknesses with vigour and determination. This is evident in the improvements in pupils' achievement in mathematics and writing in particular. Issues from the last inspection have been largely addressed. Together with the strong leadership of the headteacher and the commitment and determination of staff and governors, this indicates that the school has a good capacity to get even better.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children begin school with a wide range of skills and understanding although a significant minority have communication and language difficulties. They make good progress and become confident learners because of good teaching within a stimulating and welcoming learning environment. By the time they move into Year 1, most achieve the goals set for children of that age. Currently, there are only four children in the Reception group. The teacher plans very effectively to meet their distinctive needs within a class also containing pupils from Years 1 and 2. Sometimes they work alongside the older pupils and at others as a discrete group with the teacher or the skilled teaching assistant. They are able to explore the world around them as well as taking part in more structured activities. Their progress is monitored meticulously. The school is currently focussing on developing the use of the outside area. This is used well to promote some aspects of children's learning but it is not yet exploited fully to develop their skills and understanding in all aspects of the curriculum.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards and achievement in writing, particularly for the most able pupils.
- Embed the new tracking systems to ensure that challenging targets are set for every pupil.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The variation in standards caused by the differing nature of the small year groups is illustrated by results at the end of Year 2. In 2007, standards were exceptionally high although few pupils reached the highest levels in writing. The attainment of the current Year 2 pupils is not as high reflecting their lower starting points. The reverse is the case in Year 6. In 2007, standards dipped but pupils are reaching higher levels this year, principally because they are doing better in mathematics and writing. The most able pupils are achieving high standards in reading, mathematics and science. Pupils' achievement in writing is improving throughout the school although too few are working at the highest levels yet.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils are very proud of their school and see its size as a positive feature as 'people are so friendly and you know everyone', as one put it. They feel extremely secure and confident in the adults around them. They particularly appreciate 'bubble time', which allows them to discuss any concerns they may have with their teachers. Their behaviour is excellent for the most part. Whilst pupils say that bullying is very rare the school council is proud that everyone has signed up to their 'say no to bullying' charter which is prominently displayed in the school hall. Indeed, the school council take its responsibilities very seriously and play an important role in the life of the school. Pupils are also now very involved in village life. Attendance has improved in recent years because of the determined efforts of the headteacher. However, it remains below

average. This is no reflection on the obvious enjoyment of most pupils, who attend regularly. The figures are skewed by a very few poor attenders and a small number of pupils with significant medical needs. Pupils' enthusiasm for learning, coupled with their ready facility with ICT and improving basic skills, ensures that they are well prepared for secondary school and the world beyond.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The school's monitoring shows that teaching and learning has improved during the current academic year and this is reflected in pupils' accelerated progress. Teachers have very good relationships with pupils and high expectations of their work and behaviour. They employ a variety of strategies to interest and motivate their learners. This is confirmed by the pupils and one commented, 'Teachers take things one step forward and make learning fun.' ICT is used with increasing effect to reinforce learning, for example, when pupils in Year 6 were consolidating their understanding of plotting coordinates in the four quadrants of a graph. As a result, pupils have very good attitudes to learning and apply themselves diligently. Sometimes teachers spend too much time talking at the beginning of lessons. In consequence, the pace of learning slows and opportunities for consolidation and reinforcement of learning are missed. Teaching assistants are now making an important contribution to the quality of education, particularly for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school is developing a more creative curriculum by developing links between subjects in order to make learning more cohesive and relevant to pupils. The benefit of this is particularly evident in writing where pupils have more opportunities to write in meaningful contexts. For example, pupils in Year 3 and 4 wrote a 'contemporary' account of the sinking of the Mary Rose using 'parchment' and quill pens. The innovative use of ICT is evident in dramatic multi-media presentations on the realities of life in the mines for Victorian children and in animated representations of The Listeners. The curriculum for basic skills is becoming stronger and there are a range of programmes in place to help pupils to catch up if they are falling behind in literacy and numeracy. The impact of these is yet to be fully realised, particularly in writing. Pupils' personal development is a strong feature of the curriculum which is promoted through effective programmes for personal, social and health education as well as through the everyday life of the school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pastoral care is very strong. All staff know the pupils extremely well and ensure that they are safe and well cared for. Vulnerable pupils and those with specific needs are very well catered for and become secure and eager learners. Academic guidance is becoming more effective. The tracking system is now more robust and is helping to ensure that all pupils achieve well. It supports the setting of targets in writing and mathematics. Most pupils are clear that these targets are helping them to improve. However, the tracking system is relatively new and teachers

need to become more familiar with the performance data it in order to set consistently challenging targets for pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher leads by example and enjoys the full confidence of governors, staff, pupils and parents. One parent, representing the views of many, commented, 'The positive influence of the current head is very apparent and both we and our children are very grateful'. The headteacher monitors lessons thoroughly and this has helped to improve the quality of teaching. The staff work very effectively together to provide high quality care and a wide range of learning experiences for the pupils. They all carry a number of responsibilities and, as at is a relatively new team, they are still developing their roles as subject leaders. Governors are knowledgeable and committed and provide a good balance of support and challenge to the headteacher.

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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?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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

14 May 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Pratts Bottom Primary School, Orpington, BR6 7NX

You may remember that I visited your school recently. I am writing to thank you all for being so friendly and helpful. I really enjoyed my two days at Pratts Bottom and I thought you would like to know what I found out.

You and your parents are right to be proud of your school because it gives you a good education. Both you and your parents told me how much you enjoy school. I was very impressed by your excellent behaviour and your enthusiasm for learning. Well done! The school looks after you very well and helps you develop as thoughtful and caring young people. You told me how much you appreciate all the extra things you have to do, in sport in particular.

You get off to a good start in Reception and are now making good progress as you move through the school. You told me how much the teachers help to make learning fun for you. You are doing much better in writing this year although a few of you could do even better. Those of you who find things a little bit more difficult are given lots of support and you do very well.

You and your parents told me what a good job your headteacher is doing and I agree. She gets lots of help from all the staff and the governors. They have plans to make the school even better. I have asked them to do a couple of things that I think might help:

- Some of you who do very well in other subjects have not been doing quite as well in writing in recent years. There is improvement this year but I want the school to help you get even better with your writing.
- The school now keeps good records of how well you are doing. We want them to make even better use of these to help all of you do as well as you can and to help you to reach your targets.

Best of luck to you all

Yours truly

Graham Lee

Lead Inspector