

# Palmarsh Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	118490
<b>Local Authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	312963
<b>Inspection date</b>	24 January 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Susan Orpin

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>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	82
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Michael Cannon
<b>Headteacher</b>	Michael Anthony Alexander-Webber
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	24 March 2003
<b>School address</b>	St George's Place Hythe CT21 6NE
<b>Telephone number</b>	01303 260212
<b>Fax number</b>	01303 260212

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<b>Age group</b>	4-11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Palmarsh is a small primary school where pupils are mainly White British. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above average. More pupils arrive and leave before Year 6 than usual. In recent years, the school's roll has fallen significantly, for reasons of local demography, with a consequent reduction in classes and staff. The school has gained awards for Healthy Schools, Active Schools and Basic Skills.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Palmarsh Primary School provides its pupils with a satisfactory standard of education and is an improving school. Pupils enjoy learning, care for each other well and are developing self-confidence. Achievement is satisfactory and standards in Years 2 and 6 are average and improving steadily, especially in English. Children make satisfactory progress in the Reception class. Progress throughout the school is generally satisfactory, but good in some better lessons. Throughout the school, achievement in English, and particularly in writing, is better than in other subjects because of recent improvements to teaching.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils are keen to learn and behave well, because they know what is expected from them. Their attendance has improved steadily and is now above average. Pupils know how to stay healthy, keep safe and are sensitive and caring towards each other, as demonstrated in a lesson where they were discussing playground problems and suggesting solutions. They readily undertake responsibilities in school and make a good contribution to the local community, through fundraising and participation in local events. The school is at the heart of the local community. In lessons, pupils learn how to work together, but sometimes they are too reliant on the teacher.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Relationships are good and teachers encouraging, so pupils are confident and want to learn. Behaviour problems are few and managed well. Lessons are planned thoroughly, using regular assessments so the tasks match pupils' differing needs securely. English is more exciting than other subjects and lessons are often good. At times, pupils have to listen to teachers for too long, so they think less for themselves and rely too heavily on the teacher for solutions. Sometimes teachers do not use questions enough to challenge and really make pupils think. Most pupils are well informed about their progress, especially in English, although assessment and tracking of pupils' progress in science is not as well developed.

The curriculum is good and the development of more exciting topics in English, particularly for writing, has improved pupils' achievement. Good planning has ensured that all subjects are covered, despite the changes in mixed age classes, resulting from the reduction in pupil numbers. There is a very good programme of personal, social and health education and the curriculum is enriched well with a good range of clubs, visits and visitors. Links between subjects are beginning to be developed although there is not yet a whole-school approach. The pastoral support for pupils is a strength of the school and has had a notable impact on their personal development and well-being. Academic guidance is good and is most effective in English.

Leadership and management are good, because the headteacher and deputy headteacher have successfully maintained morale and improved standards and provision despite the difficulties caused by a reduction in pupil numbers. Partnership with parents is good. Teamwork is strong and there is a good understanding of what the school needs to do to improve further. There is a clear and up-to-date picture of all pupils' progress and attainment, which is used well to provide support for groups and individual pupils. Teaching is regularly reviewed, but the outcomes of checks do not always sufficiently emphasise what needs to be improved to ensure that teaching is more consistently good. The governance of the school is good.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 3

Provision in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory. The number of children starting in the Reception class is very small and attainment on entry varies considerably from year to year, but generally, it is below average. Children make only satisfactory progress in the Reception class so that by Year 1, they do not achieve all the goals expected for their age. Their progress is best in the areas of communication, language and literacy, personal and social development, and knowledge and understanding of the world.

Children are suitably organised and taught by the teacher or teaching assistants, so they have a secure start and know what is expected from them. They are developing confidence and independence through opportunities to organise themselves, such as self-registering on the interactive whiteboard and choosing their activities for the day. They are given good encouragement and regular praise by all adults, so they enjoy learning and behave well. At times, however, they miss stimulation, challenge and focused attention from the teacher because she is attending to older pupils in the same class. The leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are satisfactory.

### What the school should do to improve further

- improve teaching and learning to raise standards, especially in mathematics in Years 3 to 6, by developing teachers' skills in questioning and making sure that the level of work is consistently challenging
- ensure that the assessment and tracking of pupils' progress in science are as good as that in English and mathematics.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 3

Over recent years, standards by the end of Year 2 have improved steadily from below average to average, representing satisfactory achievement, given the starting points of these pupils. Standards in reading are slightly below those in writing and mathematics.

In recent years, standards in Year 6 have improved steadily from slightly below average to average, representing satisfactory achievement. Throughout the school, standards and achievement in English are improving more rapidly than mathematics because of the school's successful actions to improve the teaching of writing. In some classes, especially where there have been gaps in their previous learning, progress is good, particularly in English. Pupils with learning difficulties make similar progress to their peers.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

Pupils thoroughly enjoy being at school and most take a delight in learning. As one parent said, 'My daughter absolutely loves it here and has flourished.' Attendance is above average and is improving steadily. Pupils' awareness of healthy eating and the need for exercise is good. Pupils eat healthy snacks and energetically take part in physical education lessons and playtime games.

Pupils' behaviour and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. Relationships and teamwork are a strength of the school. Pupils are sensitive, caring and have a well-developed appreciation of their own and other cultures, for example in religious education lessons. Pupils are proud of their school, where they have learned how to keep themselves and others safe. They contribute well to the local community, for example through participation in World Harmony in Song, and to their school community. The school council is very active and, among other contributions, has provided a Buddy Bench (a place where pupils can find someone to play with). Pupils' satisfactory achievement in literacy and numeracy mean that they are soundly prepared for their future lives. Around the school, pupils are learning to take responsibility, but in some lessons, they are too reliant on the teacher.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

In the Reception Year, children are taught satisfactorily in a small group. Throughout the school, teachers offer encouragement so pupils are confident and want to learn. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour well. Lessons are planned thoroughly and, generally, teachers use their assessments to plan work that is suitable for pupils' differing needs. There is good teamwork between teachers and teaching assistants, all of whom sensitively support groups and individuals. In most lessons, the pace is brisk and teachers plan relevant resources and practical activities. The teaching of English, particularly writing, is more exciting than that of other subjects, and lessons are often good, so pupils are enthusiastic, making good progress.

At times, questions are used effectively, but there are missed opportunities for the use of more searching questions. Sometimes, pupils listen to teachers for too long and are too dependent, rather than thinking for themselves. Occasionally, teachers set challenges and work that is a little too easy, especially in mathematics. Assessment of pupils' work is satisfactory, and better in English and mathematics than in science. Most pupils are well informed about how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve, especially in English.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is planned well and reviewed regularly. All subjects are covered, despite the changes in mixed age classes resulting from the reduction in pupil numbers. A strong emphasis on creativity and a very good programme of personal, social and health education have improved pupils' personal development. English is planned well, so that pupils learn well. Science and mathematics are practical, with regular investigational work, especially in science. Links between subjects are beginning to be developed, although there is not yet a whole-school approach throughout the curriculum. The curriculum is enriched well by a diverse range of visitors and trips, such as an Ethiopian potter, a hat designer, an exchange trip to Calais and an adventurous activities residential trip. There is a good variety of after-school clubs such as dance, drama and table tennis.

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

#### **Grade: 2**

The school is a very caring community where pupils feel very safe, and know who to go to if they have any worries. As one pupil said, 'There are always people to help you.' The pastoral

care of pupils is a strength of the school. Adults provide good examples of teamwork and good relationships. Procedures to ensure pupils' safety are robust and checks are regular. Close links with parents help children settle quickly into the Reception class and Year 6 pupils are well prepared for secondary education. The procedures for helping individuals joining and leaving the school at different times are particularly well developed, with good individualised support where needed. Academic guidance is good overall. Most pupils know their targets and are increasingly involved in discussing them, especially in English. However, the use of assessment to guide pupils in science is less successful than English.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The leadership and management provided by the headteacher and his deputy are good because, despite falling pupil numbers, the school has continued to improve. They have created effective teamwork where all adults feel valued. Improvements have been made to standards in Years 2 and 6, especially in English, and pupils' attendance. The school plays a strong part in the life of the local community. Partnership with parents is good and the questionnaires demonstrate parents' strong support for the school. Teachers are highly committed to improving the school. Together with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, they have secure and accurate grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The school's use of targets is satisfactory, based on a secure analysis of pupils' attainment, and generally incorporates suitable levels of challenge. The monitoring undertaken is rigorous and comprehensive, so there is a clear and up-to-date picture of all pupils' progress. Teaching is regularly monitored and staff are provided with useful feedback, but monitoring does not always sufficiently emphasise what needs to be improved to ensure that lessons are always good.

The work of the governors is good. They are highly committed, supportive and very well informed. The chair has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and, as a group, governors provide a good level of challenge. The school's capacity to improve is good.

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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?	3
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?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
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	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
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?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

<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>	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	3
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	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**

25 January 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Palmarsh Primary School, Hythe CT21 6NE

Thank you for making us so welcome in your school. We enjoyed talking to you and were very impressed by how friendly, polite and confident you are. Your school is giving you a satisfactory standard of education.

These are some of the good points we found out about your school:

- you make satisfactory progress and your standards are improving
- you enjoy school, behave well and take good care of yourselves and others
- you contribute well to your school and to the local community
- you are taught in a satisfactory way and in English, lessons are often good
- most of you know how you can improve your work, especially in English, although you do not have as much information in science
- your English, especially writing, has improved well because of improvements to teaching
- adults at the school take good care of you
- the school is led well; adults work as a team and know what to do to make the right improvements.

To help your school get even better, we have asked your teachers to:

- improve teaching so that it is good in all lessons by making sure that work is never too easy for you and by improving questions to help you think for yourselves
- make sure that you know how well you are doing in science.

You can help by making sure you take every opportunity to consider and reflect in your lessons.

Yours sincerely

Sue Orpin Lead Inspector

**Annex B**



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Sue Orpin  
Lead Inspector