

Palm Bay Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118583
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	313002
Inspection dates	6–7 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Anna Sketchley

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	324
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Vacant Position
Headteacher	M W Cowell
Date of previous school inspection	13 January 2003
School address	Palm Bay Avenue Cliftonville Margate CT9 3PP
Telephone number	01843 290050
Fax number	01843 224669

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Palm Bay is a popular school situated on the outskirts of Margate. The number of pupils entitled to free school meals and those from ethnic minority groups is low but the number with learning difficulties and disabilities is above average. Pupils join the school with skills expected for their age. Some are taught in mixed age classes.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Palm Bay is a good and effective school. Standards are above average and pupils make good progress. The school has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection despite significant disruption to the leadership of the school in the past. With the recent appointment of a new leadership team and a more settled staff, the school has good capacity for further improvement. Although standards and achievement dipped in 2006 the school recognised this and has successfully implemented a number of strategies to raise attainment. Reorganisation of staffing, special booster classes, new assessment and tracking of pupil progress, individual targets for pupils and changes to the curriculum have all helped to raise standards throughout the year. Children join the school with standards expected for their age and they get off to a really good start in Reception. Pupils of all abilities make good progress and this is maintained throughout their infant years. By the end of Year 6 they are reaching standards that are above average in English, mathematics and science.

All this has been achieved through good leadership and management, not least by the strong headteacher and committed staff who constantly strive together for improvement. However, the school recognises that the new, less experienced leaders have yet to develop the skills to monitor and evaluate their areas of responsibility as effectively as they might.

Relationships in the school are very good and all pupils are well known to adults. The outstanding pastoral care of pupils is a major contributory factor to the good care, support and guidance that pupils receive. This is recognised by parents who make many positive comments such as, 'My child has always been well supported at Palm Bay. His academic needs were identified and supported to enable him to achieve his best.' All pupils are guided well in their learning and the school caters very well for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. As a result, pupils' personal development and well-being are good and they demonstrate very positive attitudes and behave well. They enjoy coming to school and attendance is above average. Another parent says, 'My child enjoys coming to school so much she wants to achieve 100% attendance for the year!'

The school's partnerships with other organisations and parents are outstanding and have made an important contribution to the good curriculum which is well planned and takes into account the span of ages and starting points of the pupils in the different classes. Teaching is good overall and in some cases outstanding, although this is not yet consistent throughout the school. Occasionally pupils lose concentration because the pace of a lesson is too slow or there is inappropriate challenge.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of teaching, particularly the pace and the appropriateness of challenge of some lessons.
- Ensure that all leaders have the skills and training to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the provision for which they are responsible so that all pupils make at least good progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good and standards are above average. Last year a dip in standards and achievement caused the school to miss its challenging targets at the end of Year 6, especially

in mathematics. However, this was recognised by the school and rigorous action was taken swiftly to bring improvement. Changes in staffing and the curriculum have ensured that the school is on course this year to meet its targets, and achievement and standards have risen significantly. The small classes and very good provision in Reception ensure that pupils get off to a flying start. The Foundation Stage is a strength of the school because pupils make such good progress. Almost all will reach the standards expected and many will exceed them by the end of the Reception Year. Reading standards are especially good. Pupils continue to make good progress throughout their infant years and despite previously falling standards, achievement this year is good and early test results show that standards are above average in reading and mathematics. However, writing standards are average because, despite all the school is doing, some boys still find it difficult to acquire these skills. By the end of Year 6 pupils' progress remains good and they are reaching above average standards in English, mathematics and science.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' well developed personal skills are important reasons for their good progress. Pupils enjoy lessons, attend regularly and are justifiably proud of their achievements. They speak highly of the strong relationships between the staff and themselves. They are confident that they will not be bullied and feel secure because of this. One pupil put this in a nutshell when remarking, 'It's such a good school because people look after us and make us feel safe'. They have an excellent understanding of the need to live healthily and take great pride in eating the right foods and taking enough exercise to keep them fit. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils think deeply about issues such as conservation and the environment and have produced some vivid pictures in their 'exploring nature through art' project. They develop a very good sense of right and wrong which is why they behave so well. They are keen to take responsibility. Members of the school council, in particular, show impressive levels of maturity when making recommendations to improve the school further and working with the local council to reduce litter in the town. Their well developed literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills mean that pupils are well prepared for the future and are beginning to grasp the responsibilities they will face.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good and sometimes outstanding. It has been very effective in addressing previously falling standards. However, the outstanding practice is as yet not shared sufficiently which leads to there being inconsistencies in the quality of teaching across the school. In the really good lessons there is a cracking pace and much excitement. Reception pupils were totally captivated when involved in an animal hunt whilst learning skills in communication and language. Thorough planning identifies tasks which usually match the needs of pupils well and includes opportunities to assess how well they are progressing. Teachers have good subject knowledge and as a result set clear lesson objectives and ask challenging questions ensuring that pupils know and understand what they are learning. This is helping them to make good progress. Marking is very good and supports the pupils in the improvement of their work. Teachers have high expectations and manage pupils firmly but in a friendly and warm way. This creates a very good climate for learning where pupils are almost always on task. Occasionally, some

introductions to lessons are too long causing the pace of the lesson to slow and this results in some pupils becoming restless. A loss of concentration also happens when pupils are sometimes left too long grappling with challenging tasks without the help of their teacher.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides pupils with a good curriculum enriched with a wide variety of visits, visitors and extra-curricular activities. Topics are carefully planned on a two year rolling programme which takes account of the expectations for pupils in mixed age classes effectively. Personal, social and health education is having a positive impact on pupils' personal development and well-being.

Reception pupils are skilfully involved in the day-to-day planning of a wide range of stimulating tasks that create a vibrant atmosphere in which to learn. Very good use is being made of the secure outdoor area as an extension of the classroom. In Years 1 and 2 the curriculum is being developed to give pupils more creative opportunities and to widen the links between subjects through topic work. This is helping to meet pupils' different needs, and is beginning to raise boys' interest and achievement in writing. The school plans to develop the creative curriculum further and introduce it into the junior years but this has yet to be implemented. Whole school targets are having a dramatic effect upon raising standards in mathematics and new tracking arrangements for reading and writing are proving very successful. Achievement and standards of older pupils in mathematics and English have seen a quick rise this year. This is because of the early identification of those pupils needing extra help and the subsequent organisation of booster groups and weekly setting. The good use of literacy, numeracy and ICT skills in other curriculum areas is also helping to raise standards.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The pastoral care offered to pupils is outstanding. The school is an extremely happy, friendly place where relationships are excellent and adults and children alike show respect for each other. Staff know the pupils very well and are committed to ensuring their well-being by providing a safe, secure, attractive and welcoming environment in which to learn. Links with parents, pre-school groups and with secondary schools are very good.

All pupils are given good advice and support to improve their work, especially through effective marking. They are involved in their learning and have targets to meet which help them to raise their achievement. Older pupils know clearly what level they are at and what they must do to reach a higher one. Assessment and tracking procedures are good but currently have had more effect on raising pupils' achievement in literacy than in numeracy, particularly in the junior years.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Good leadership and management are key reasons for the school's success. The headteacher leads strongly and is respected highly by parents, pupils and staff. He is supported well by other leaders who share his high expectations for the school. However, the school recognises that each leader needs to monitor their area of responsibility more rigorously to raise standards

of teaching and learning further. Self-evaluation systems are good, and have helped the leaders raise standards significantly this year. In particular, changes to staffing, 'booster' classes for pupils who were underachieving and improvements to the curriculum in Years 1 and 2 have all contributed to significantly higher attainment in English, mathematics and science. The leaders have developed excellent links with other schools and organisations and this has done much to enhance the curriculum and raise standards.

The governing body provides satisfactory support and guidance to the school, but recognises that it might do more to challenge the school about its performance.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
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	1
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	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 performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	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

8 June 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Palm Bay Primary School, Margate CT9 3PP

Thank you very much for such a friendly welcome when we visited your school. We really enjoyed spending time with you and talking to you. We especially enjoyed being interviewed for your school newspaper! Your parents told us what a good school they think Palm Bay is and we agree with them. These are some of the best things we found:

- You all learn well and make good progress.
- You are proud of your school, enjoy coming and have a zest for life because you know how to keep healthy and safe.
- You are taught well and there are lots of extra activities in which you enjoy taking part.
- Your behaviour is very good and you work hard in lessons.
- You are especially well cared for and told us how happy and safe you feel in school.
- Your headteacher and all other teachers and adults lead your school very well.

Your school knows what it needs to do next to improve and we have asked them to do some things to make your learning even better:

- We have asked your teachers to make sure that all your lessons move along quickly and challenge you to make the best use of your time and talents.
- We have also asked your teachers to check to make sure that everyone is teaching you in the very best possible way.

With best wishes

Anna Sketchkey Lead inspector