

Platts Heath Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118295
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	339186
Inspection dates	24–25 May 2010
Reporting inspector	Mike Capper

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 of pupils on the school roll	73
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Deborah Henderson
Headteacher	Ian Priddle
Date of previous school inspection	5 July 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Inspectors observed eight lessons, with four teachers being seen. Meetings were held with governors, staff and groups of pupils. The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at teachers' planning, the school's assessment information and safeguarding policies and samples of pupils' work. Inspectors analysed 37 questionnaires from parents and carers

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the impact of the school's strategies to improve the progress of pupils in Years 1 and 2
- the use of the outdoor area to support learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage
- the involvement of leaders at all levels in evaluating the work of the school
- pupils' understanding of how to improve their work and their knowledge of cultures other than their own.

Information about the school

This small rural school take pupils from the village of Platts Heath as well as from the surrounding area. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average. Most, but not all, of these pupils have moderate learning difficulties. Virtually all pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. This is the first year that children in the Early Years Foundation Stage have been taught in a separate class. In the past, they were taught alongside pupils in Years 1 and 2.

The school has a number of awards including Activemark and Healthy School status.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

This is a satisfactory school that is particularly successful at supporting pupils' personal development. Pupils are thoughtful and kind and they develop positive attitudes towards learning. There is a calm and happy atmosphere in lessons, with pupils supporting each other very sensitively. As one pupil said, 'We are all friends and there is always someone to look after you when you feel sad.'

Pupils' attainment by the end of Year 6 is broadly average and their achievement is satisfactory. However, progress is not even across the school. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, where good teaching meets differing needs well, children make good progress. In Key Stages 1 and 2, progress is satisfactory because teachers do not always make enough use of assessment information to ensure that work is pitched at the right level for all pupils.

Pupils are good ambassadors for the school. They are well cared for and are very happy at school. Pupils behave well and are polite and helpful. They feel that they are kept extremely safe and they are very confident that any problems would be sorted out quickly by staff. Pupils keenly take on responsibility and make a good contribution to the community by, for example, looking after the environment. Pupils have a limited knowledge of cultures other than their own and have astutely identified for themselves that they could be given more help in understanding how they can improve their work through the sharper use of targets and marking.

Leaders are moving the school forward steadily. The well-respected headteacher ensures that there is good engagement with parents and carers, as well as a strong partnership with other schools and outside groups. There are satisfactory systems for evaluating the school's work. These have been improving recently but data are not yet used sharply enough to check that all pupils are doing well. There is regular monitoring of teaching but not all subject leaders are involved in this and there is insufficient focus on how well pupils are learning or on checking that policies such as the marking policy are being applied consistently and are having the desired effect. Despite this, the school has demonstrated that there is a sound capacity to improve further in the way that it has significantly enhanced provision for the youngest children and taken effective steps to improve progress in Years 1 and 2. Governors are very perceptive and they know that to build this capacity more, they need to improve staff relationships so that teamwork is stronger and the drive for improvement more firmly embedded across the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching in Key Stages 1 and 2 so that at least 75% is good

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or better by April 2011 by

- ensuring that teachers make sharper use of assessment information to provide consistently the right level of challenge for all pupils
- ensuring that teachers mark pupils' work regularly and use this and target setting to help pupils understand the next steps in their learning
- Strengthen self-evaluation and build the school's capacity to improve more quickly by January 2011 by
 - ensuring that monitoring by leaders at all levels focuses rigorously on how well pupils are learning and on checking that school policies are being applied consistently and are having the desired effect
 - sharpening the use of data to check the progress of different groups
 - building relationships across the school so that adults are all working together to drive forward priorities for improvement.
- Give pupils more opportunities to learn about cultures other than their own by July 2011.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory and they are soundly prepared for the next stage of their education and later life. Although rates of attendance are average, this does not reflect pupils' thorough enjoyment of school. They have positive attitudes towards learning and make satisfactory progress in most lessons. For example, in a satisfactory literacy lesson, pupils worked together enthusiastically on identifying rhyming words, sharing their ideas happily. When working with an adult, learning moved on quickly, but at other times, the pace of learning was slower because work was not pitched at the right level for all pupils. In a satisfactory numeracy lesson about Venn diagrams, pupils very enthusiastically gathered their own data but this took too long, so some did not get on to the main task. Where progress in lessons is good, differing needs are met well. In a good literacy lesson, pupils made quick progress in improving their writing skills because they were able to explore ideas and the use of carefully chosen books by Roald Dahl made learning purposeful.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress. As with other pupils, there are occasions when work is not pitched at the right level for them.

Pupils learn to consider complex issues such as the right questions to ask when the school council is involved in interviews for the new headteacher. They develop a strong sense of right and wrong and happily take part in acts of worship. They work hard most of the time, although some do not present their work neatly enough. Pupils keenly adopt healthy lifestyles. The school's good work in this area is reflected in their Activemark and Healthy School status. Pupils have a limited knowledge of cultures or beliefs other than their own, although they show good respect for different beliefs when talking about them.

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Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Members of staff work successfully to provide good quality pastoral care. There are good links with outside agencies to ensure that pupils who are in danger of falling behind are given extra help. Pupils are given sound academic support but the practice of setting targets is not yet consistently strong across the school

Teachers make learning fun and manage pupils' behaviour well. Skilled teaching assistants have a good impact on learning. Where teaching and learning are good, assessment information is used well to plan the next steps in learning. However, this is not yet consistent in all lessons. The quality of marking is patchy. It is best in Years 3 and 4, but in other classes work is either not marked regularly enough or written comments do not show pupils how to improve

The curriculum soundly promotes basic skills. Teachers are becoming more adept at linking subjects together. However, some topics in history or geography are studied in insufficient detail. Despite the positive impact of special days such as the school 'trip' to Panama, the curriculum does not focus closely enough on teaching pupils about life in other parts of the United Kingdom or beyond.

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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A wide range of enrichment activities such as sports clubs and visits contribute well to pupils' enjoyment of school.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders at all levels have a strong determination to improve provision and in some areas such as the Early Years Foundation Stage there have already been some very positive developments. However, relationships between staff are fragile and this is a barrier to improvement. Leaders know that they need to tackle this so that their ambition and drive for improvement can be more firmly embedded across the whole school. Recent developments such as the improved use of data and the more frequent monitoring are beginning to improve learning but these systems are not yet rigorous enough and have not yet had sufficient impact on ironing out inconsistencies in teaching so that more of it is good. Governors are very knowledgeable about the school and they provide good challenge to senior leaders.

Leaders promote equality and tackle discrimination satisfactorily. There is no discrimination and the school is doing the right things to even out the progress of pupils. The school makes a satisfactory contribution to community cohesion. Good links with parents and carers and strong partnerships with community groups means that the school is responsive to local need but pupils' understanding of life in multicultural Britain and beyond is less strongly developed and is a priority for development.

The school has sound safeguarding procedures. Government requirements are met. Leaders know that site security could be improved and plans are in place to do this over half term now that new gates have been installed. This will address a concern raised by a small number of parents.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms	
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage because they are taught well and develop very positive attitudes towards learning. Although there is some variation from year to year, most children are working at the levels expected for their age when they start school. Children's attainment is improving now that they are being taught in a single-age class, and it is on track to be above average by the end of the current year. This is higher than in previous years. There is a superb atmosphere in lessons, with children working together happily and behaving very sensibly all of the time. Children are independent and confident. Adults support children sensitively and usually intervene quickly when it is time to move learning on. Adults assess learning carefully and use this information effectively to ensure that work is closely matched to need. There is an exciting curriculum that links areas of learning together very successfully. For example, work on the theme of garden centres included learning about capacity by comparing flowerpots as well as writing and designing seed packets and counting money as shop assistants. The outdoor area is used well to support learning and to give children opportunities to explore their own ideas.

Provision is well led and managed. Members of staff monitor progress very closely and are making increasingly sharp use of data to look for trends in attainment over time so that any comparative areas of weakness can be tackled quickly. For example, they are currently focusing on improving boys' writing by trying to integrate more opportunities to practise skills in outdoor activities. Leaders know that this is still work in progress

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

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Views of parents and carers

Most parents and carers are pleased with the work of the school. Positive comments included, 'The school is very much at the centre of the community' and 'Children are keen and excited to learn.' Some parents and carers are concerned about how the school tackles unacceptable behaviour. The inspection team saw none and found that the school has good systems for tackling it, should it occur. Inspectors endorse the views of some parents and carers that they could be given more help in supporting learning at home. While there is a reasonable amount of homework, targets are not used well enough to inform parents and carers about the next steps for their children.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Platts Heath Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 37 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 73 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	23	62	11	30	0	0	1	3
The school keeps my child safe	18	49	16	43	2	5	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	17	46	18	49	2	5	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	17	46	18	49	1	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	20	54	15	41	0	0	1	3
The school helps me to support my child's learning	15	41	13	35	7	19	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	18	49	17	46	2	5	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	17	46	13	35	1	3	2	5
The school meets my child's particular needs	19	51	15	41	3	8	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	21	57	10	27	4	11	2	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	20	54	11	30	2	5	2	5
The school is led and managed effectively	18	49	14	38	4	11	1	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	22	59	13	35	2	5	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



26 May 2010

Dear Children

Inspection of Platts Heath Primary School, Platts Heath ME17 2NH

Thank you for being so welcoming and helpful when we visited your school recently. At the moment, your school is providing a satisfactory education. This means that we found some good things in the school but also some things that need improving.

Here are some of the things we found out about your school.

- You do well in the Reception Year, where you are taught well. Satisfactory teaching means that you then make steady progress in the rest of the school.
- You behave well most of the time and enjoy school, especially visits and sports activities
- You know who to turn to if you have a worry and feel that you are kept very safe. The school council does a good job.
- All adults in school are caring and give you suitable help when you have problems with your work.
- Leaders are doing the right things to move the school forward.

Your teachers know that there is still work to be done to make the school even better.

We have suggested three things that we think will help.

- Check that your teachers always expect enough of you and are using marking and target setting to help you understand how to improve your work
- Fasten the pace of improvement by ensuring that everyone gets on well together and are checking your learning carefully so that they know what to do next.
- Give you more opportunities to learn about cultures other than your own.

We wish you all well for the future. You can help your teachers by trying to present your work neatly all of the time.

Yours sincerely

Mike Capper

Lead inspector

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