

Platt Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| Unique Reference Number | 118728 |
| Local Authority | Kent |
| Inspection number | 339284 |
| Inspection dates | 26–27 May 2010 |
| Reporting inspector | Margaret Coussins |

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

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|--|--|
| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary aided |
| Age range of pupils | 4–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 152 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Sarah Allewell |
| Headteacher | Sonia Phillips |
| Date of previous school inspection | 13 June 2007 |
| School address | St Mary's Platt Sevenoaks TN15 8JY |
| Telephone number | 01732 882596 |
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed 15 lessons and seven teachers. They held meetings with pupils, governors, the acting headteacher and other teachers with leadership responsibilities. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a range of school documentation including the school improvement plan, monitoring records, pupils' progress records and safeguarding procedures. Questionnaires from 77 parents and carers were received and analysed, as well as others from pupils and staff.

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

- how high is the level of challenge in lessons to determine whether pupils make the progress they should
- how successfully the curriculum has been developed and its impact on pupils' learning, enjoyment and achievement
- what is the impact of the work of senior leaders and middle managers on driving school improvement
- how effectively pupils take on their roles and responsibilities, for example in their Eco work.

Information about the school

Platt is a smaller-than-average primary school. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below that found nationally. Their needs relate mainly to moderate learning difficulties. The school makes provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage in a Reception class. There is a Nursery school on the school site and a breakfast club. These are managed by private providers and therefore not included in this inspection. In April 2010, the deputy headteacher was appointed to the role of acting headteacher. The school has gained the Healthy School, Eco School and Activemark awards.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Pupils, parents and carers, staff and governors are all, rightly, proud of this good school. One parent/carer summed up the views of most and wrote, 'A wonderful team, friendly, approachable, understanding, helpful. I am so proud my child attends, she enjoys every day.' Systems for safeguarding pupils are outstanding, ensuring that pupils feel extremely safe in school. The care, guidance and support they receive are of the highest quality. Pupils take on responsibilities enthusiastically and make an outstanding contribution to the school and wider community. The work of the school to achieve the Healthy School and Activemark awards means that pupils have an excellent understanding of the need for regular exercise and a healthy, balanced diet to keep fit and well. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The caring and Christian ethos of the school helps pupils to learn to be tolerant and acquire understanding and makes a significant contribution to their spiritual awareness. The pupils understand and respect the diversity of faiths, cultures and backgrounds in their own school, for example through Traveller Awareness Day, and in the wider community through links with schools in other parts of the country. Attendance is average. Although most pupils attend regularly, those from a small number of families are absent from school so frequently that they miss out on important learning.

Pupils' achievement and enjoyment of their learning are good. Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. As a small school, the relatively small and fluctuating numbers in the Year 6 cohorts means that year-on-year comparisons are problematic. Although, over the past three years, some pupils have not made the expected progress from the end of Year 2 to the end of Year 6, the large majority have reached the expected levels for their age and attainment is average. However, throughout the school, pupils' work and the school's tracking data show that all groups, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are making good progress. In the current Year 6, most pupils are on track to achieve the expected levels and almost half are on track to achieve the higher levels in English, mathematics and science. Where there is good teaching, combined with the interesting, lively, curriculum, pupils are inspired and motivated to become independent and resourceful learners. However, there is some inconsistency in the quality of teaching throughout the school and, occasionally, expectations are not high enough, work is not sufficiently challenging and the pace of learning and progress is too slow.

The acting headteacher and senior leaders work closely together to evaluate the strengths and areas for development in the school effectively and maintain an ambitious drive for improvement. The school engages extremely well with parents and carers and this contributes significantly to the school's success. The school has successfully

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improved pupils' rates of progress, which dipped to satisfactory after the last inspection, and has a good capacity to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that teaching consistently matches that of the best to sustain the good progress seen during the inspection by:
 - pacing lessons well, so that pupils have time to get on with their learning and accomplish as much as they can
 - ensuring that expectations are high enough and all lessons provide the right amount of challenge to learners.
- Improve attendance by building on the excellent partnerships with parents and carers to ensure the more regular attendance of a small group of persistent absentees.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Pupils' good behaviour and enthusiasm in lessons contributes well to their good learning and progress. Working collaboratively and learning through problem-solving and investigative activities inspires pupils and also contributes to their good progress. For example, in a mathematics lesson, pupils collaborated well with their partners to solve 'real life' problems about numbers. The skills they acquired in negotiating helped them to decide which number operations to use and explain different ways to work out answers to the problems. The pupils worked hard and made good progress because the level of challenge and the teacher's expectations were high. One pupil said, 'It's a bit hard but that's good because it makes you think and work hard and we help each other, so if I'm stuck, he gives me good ideas.'

Pupils have good opportunities to use their initiative and develop their independent learning skills well. In an English lesson linked to their work on the Vikings, pupils were able to empathise with characters through opportunities to engage in role-play through 'freeze frame' activities. As one child said, 'Acting it out helps me to understand what they felt and so I've got lots of ideas about what to write.'

Pupils are very well informed and aware of issues affecting society as a whole through their work as an Eco school and by promoting the principles of fair trade, which are championed very effectively by groups representing the whole school. Pupils take their responsibilities in class and around the school very seriously and know they have an important contribution to make to the work of the school. For example, the school council members, the head girl and head boy, and their deputies, and playground pals are excellent role models for younger pupils and effectively promote and encourage good behaviour and attitudes.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

How effective is the provision?

Inspectors agree with the comment from a parent/carer, 'The teaching staff at Platt are extremely dedicated and caring. They offer an open door policy and are very approachable. My children enjoy going to school and are encouraged to achieve their targets.' Teachers plan and prepare lessons very thoroughly and work hard to make them interesting and exciting for pupils. There is a good pace to learning in many lessons and teachers bring subjects alive very imaginatively. In these lessons, pupils make good progress because learning is challenging and particularly memorable for them. The same level of learning and progress is not consistent in all lessons. Although there are good systems for assessing pupils' learning and good use is made of assessment information to plan the next stages for most pupils in their learning, this is not always the case. Very occasionally, lessons are planned that do not challenge all pupils sufficiently. Good marking by teachers gives pupils clear guidance about the next steps they need to take to improve their work and helps pupils to evaluate their own progress and understanding. Pupils are clearly aware of their individual targets for learning.

The good, well-balanced curriculum is carefully planned to provide activities that are relevant and meaningful to pupils. Themed and creative approaches to learning, for example the Big Election where the creative party won over the scientific and sporty parties, are enhanced by a wide range of enrichment opportunities including clubs,

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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visitors to school and trips. These activities effectively broaden pupils' interests and experiences.

Parents and carers and pupils agree that the school looks after the pupils exceptionally well. One parent/carer wrote, 'I feel the school really cares about my child's well-being.' The needs of pupils requiring additional help are very well met and enhanced by good links with other agencies to provide well-targeted support.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

| | |
|--|----------|
| The quality of teaching | 2 |
| Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning | 2 |
| The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships | 2 |
| The effectiveness of care, guidance and support | 1 |

How effective are leadership and management?

The consistency of approach of all leaders is an example of the effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement and this has supported the smooth transition into the acting headteacher role by the deputy headteacher. In addition, the governors and the local authority have established good support from a consultant headteacher from a partnership school. Monitoring, self-evaluation and the tracking of pupils' progress are effective and lead to a clear identification of what needs to be improved and well-targeted support. For example, the school's focus on guided writing to tackle weaknesses in sentence structure has resulted in higher-quality writing from pupils and helped to close the gap between attainment in writing and reading. Teamwork by all staff is strong and there is a shared direction and vision for the future. This teamwork includes strategic planning and fundraising for a proposed new school building. By forming a specific committee to oversee the building project, the governing body has ensured that the school is not neglecting its main priority, which is to sustain and improve further the quality of teaching and learning for its pupils. The governing body knows the school well, provides good support and the school benefits from the expertise among its members. Although they share their vision for improvement well, governors could provide more rigour in their challenge to the school and more stringent monitoring of the impact of their work.

The inclusive ethos of the school ensures that all pupils have equal opportunities to learn and develop as well-rounded individuals without fear of discrimination. Community cohesion is good. The school has strong links with the local community and the local church, and actively encourages an understanding and respect of different cultures and faiths and the diversity in the community and the wider world. The school engages community groups successfully, for example the Traveller community. Safeguarding procedures are very well developed, known by all staff and applied across all aspects of

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the school's work.

These are the grades for leadership and management

| | |
|--|----------|
| The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement | 2 |
| Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning | 2 |
| The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met | 2 |
| The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers | 1 |
| The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being | 2 |
| The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination | 2 |
| The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures | 1 |
| The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion | 2 |
| The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money | 2 |

Early Years Foundation Stage

From their differing starting points, children achieve well, meeting and sometimes exceeding the goals for all areas of their learning by the time they move into the next class. There are very positive, trusting relationships with staff and, as a result, children are happy, behave well, settle contentedly into the routines of the day and are very well cared for.

Adults create a calm, purposeful learning environment in which the children develop good learning skills. Children have a good understanding of the need to keep themselves healthy and safe. One child explained that, before eating their fruit at snack time, 'We wash our hands so we don't get germs.' Children play well together and quickly develop independence and good personal and social skills by sharing well and taking turns. They develop their early reading and writing skills well, as there are many opportunities to write for practical purposes such as menus for the 'Chinese Restaurant' and instructions for planting and growing seeds in their indoor gardens. They composed a letter together enthusiastically after reading the book *Dear Greenpeace*, showing that the school's focus on environmental awareness starts successfully with the youngest children.

Teachers' good questioning skills encourage children to talk about what they are doing and learning. They are keen to participate and demonstrate a well-developed vocabulary. When talking about why church is a special place for them and how it

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makes them feel, they responded with, 'happy', 'warm', 'excited' and 'impressed'. Children are encouraged to develop their curiosity through investigation and exploration. They described their outdoor exploration with observations such as, 'Gravity means things go quickly when you drop them', and 'I know how the moon stays in the air because of gravity.' The outdoor area is well set up but the limitations of the building mean that other classes also use it, which restricts its use by the Early Years Foundation Stage to timetabled sessions, rather than enabling continual access as an extended classroom. There are very good links with parents and carers to ensure a smooth transition into school. Regular assessments enable staff to keep track of children's progress and plan the next steps in their learning.

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 |

Views of parents and carers

The good proportion of parents and carers who returned the questionnaire were almost unanimously delighted with all aspects of the school's work. The very large majority agree that their children enjoy school and that they are happy with their children's experience at school and all agree that the school keeps their children safe. A very small minority do not feel that their children are making enough progress or that the school was not meeting their children's particular needs. The inspection found that pupils' progress is mostly good and that the school meets individual needs well. The inspectors fully support parents' and carers' positive views about the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Platt Church of England 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 77 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 152 pupils registered at the school.

| Statements | Strongly Agree | | Agree | | Disagree | | Strongly disagree | |
|---|----------------|----|-------|----|----------|---|-------------------|---|
| | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % |
| My child enjoys school | 46 | 60 | 27 | 35 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| The school keeps my child safe | 57 | 74 | 20 | 26 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school informs me about my child's progress | 39 | 51 | 36 | 47 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| My child is making enough progress at this school | 33 | 43 | 36 | 47 | 6 | 8 | 1 | 1 |
| The teaching is good at this school | 37 | 48 | 36 | 47 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| The school helps me to support my child's learning | 31 | 40 | 41 | 53 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle | 41 | 53 | 32 | 42 | 3 | 4 | 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) | 35 | 46 | 28 | 36 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| The school meets my child's particular needs | 34 | 44 | 33 | 43 | 5 | 7 | 1 | 1 |
| The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour | 31 | 40 | 36 | 47 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns | 37 | 48 | 31 | 40 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 1 |
| The school is led and managed effectively | 41 | 53 | 31 | 40 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school | 43 | 56 | 30 | 39 | 2 | 3 | 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.



27 May 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Platt Church of England Primary School, Sevenoaks, TN15 8JY

I am writing to thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school and for talking to us about your work. You were very polite and friendly. You are right to enjoy coming to Platt because it is a good school.

I agree with you and your parents and carers that your school is an exceptionally caring and safe place to be and this, with your good behaviour and enthusiasm to learn, helps you make good progress. Your school has improved in lots of ways since the last visit by the inspectors because the acting headteacher and all the adults work very hard to make it better. You work hard too and by the time you go to your next school you are doing as well as pupils in most other schools in your English, mathematics and science work. I was very impressed with how well you know how to stay fit and healthy, all the things you do for the school and the wider community, and particularly how hard you work and your enthusiasm to make the school and the community a 'greener' place to be. All of you make good progress because you are taught well and teachers plan interesting and exciting things for you to do. Your parents and carers are very pleased that you come to this school.

There are two things that will help the school do even better:

- All of you should try and come to school every single day because if you are away you miss out on important learning.
- All of your lessons should be as good as the very best ones and I would like your teachers to make sure that they always plan work that is not too easy for you so you can learn even faster.

I really enjoyed talking to you and watching you learn. You can help your teachers by continuing to work hard and keeping your enthusiasm for learning.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Coussins

Lead inspector

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