

Palatine Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	126159
Local Authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	340929
Inspection dates	17–18 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Anne Duffy HMI

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	95
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Patricia Peal
Headteacher	Nicholas Dry
Date of previous school inspection	13 March 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. Inspectors spent the majority of their time looking at learning; this included observing 12 lessons or parts of lessons and 14 teachers. Inspectors also held meetings with staff, governors, including a parent governor, and pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at documentation and policies, including the school's tracking of pupils' progress and the school improvement plan. They also studied pupil and staff questionnaires and the 40 questionnaires returned by parents and carers.

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

- the progress made by all pupils as shown by the tracking and analysis of data as well as observation
- the effectiveness of assessment procedures in supporting learning
- the contribution made by changes to the curriculum to pupil outcomes
- the effectiveness of leadership and management in ensuring accountability, embedding ambition and driving improvement across the school
- arrangements for safeguarding.

Information about the school

Palatine is a special school for pupils with a wide range of special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school has been in existence in its current form on a redeveloped site since February 2007, following major re-organisation of special school provision within the local authority. During this time the proportion of pupils with moderate learning difficulties has reduced from approximately 50% to 30%, and the number of pupils with more severe needs, particularly autistic spectrum condition (ASC) and profound and multiple learning difficulties has increased. About 26% of pupils are eligible for free school meals, and about 10% of pupils are from ethnic minorities across a range of backgrounds. Five per cent are looked after by the local authority. The school provides outreach support for primary-aged pupils who have a statement of special education needs in relation to ASC. It also runs a holiday club and has recently been involved with the local authority in developing the educational element of residential provision for pupils with severe autism and challenging behaviour; this provision did not form part of the inspection. The school has National Healthy Schools Status and an Activemark award.

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

Palatine Primary School is a good school in which pupils' enjoyment is reflected in the particularly good progress they make in their personal development. As one parent wrote, 'since starting at Palatine my child has grown in self-esteem and confidence'. This progress is supported by the outstanding care and guidance that the pupils receive and the strong relationships that exist with parents and with other partners.

The school has faced many challenges over the past three years as a result of the re-organisation of specialist provision within the local authority. Demonstrating effective self-evaluation, the school has responded positively to all opportunities. New buildings, new approaches, and new staffing structures have all been part of the school's development. New posts and responsibilities have been created across the staff and there is a strong sense that the school's motto, 'I can and I will', is increasingly shared by all. All these developments are undoubtedly taking the school forward as it grows and its capacity for sustained improvement is good.

All groups of pupils achieve well regardless of ethnicity or gender. The very large majority make good progress in their work, and, for many, their progress in communication, personal and social skills is outstanding. Imaginative curriculum developments have been very effective in providing a varied and interesting range of topics and activities through which pupils learn. The organisation of mixed-age class groups as well as specialist groups for those with the highest level of need is well established. However, the wide range of needs in some classes is challenging for teachers and not all are delivering lessons that are consistently enabling maximum progress to be made. Some teaching has significant strengths and the school has taken steps to extend the use of teaching approaches to meet the needs of all the pupils. This has been particularly effective in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The strong focus upon individual targets is paying dividends in improving pupils' self-help skills and behaviour but, despite improved planning, some whole group teaching has yet to ensure that the intended learning outcomes are always achieved. While assessment over time is strong, ongoing, day-to-day assessment is not yet used consistently well to evaluate progress made in lessons. Consideration of individual levels and needs is evident in lesson plans but in practice this sometimes means an activity being supported, and occasionally taken over, by support assistants. Some middle leaders are relatively new to the role so are yet to have maximum impact in ensuring that teaching is as good as it can be in all lessons.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

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- Ensure that the quality of teaching is consistently good or better by:
 - strengthening further the roles and responsibilities of learning leaders in monitoring lesson planning and delivery, and ensuring accountability
 - consistently putting into practice planning for individual pupils, particularly by ensuring that teaching assistants play an effective role in supporting independent learning
 - making consistent use of assessment as part of everyday classroom practice.

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

Pupils make good progress through the P levels and the early levels of the National Curriculum. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children also make good progress in their learning. Progress against targets is tracked in careful detail by the senior leadership team. Pupils' individual communication and mobility needs are well supported so that they are able to extend their learning in a range of different situations. They communicate with a range of adults with increasing success. While the school can show that there is little significant difference between different groups, it acknowledges that there is an imbalance between individual progress recorded in learning and that shown in other outcomes .

Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and any absence is invariably for medical reasons. Pupils' behaviour overall is outstanding. Older pupils speak confidently about the importance of 'being sensible' and all are proud of the stickers that they earn both for good work and good behaviour. It is clear that pupils know what is expected of them and as a result they are very tolerant of one another. They show that they have trust in the adults working with them so that they feel extremely safe. Those with high levels of physical and medical need are not deterred from taking part in physical activity, such as regular swimming, which both challenges and engages them well. The very attractive dining hall, coupled with an excellent menu, provides a very sociable lunchtime for pupils and the large majority are prepared to surrender their preferred foods to try other, more healthy options.

Members of the school council, buddies and pupils with particular 'jobs', such as being the class's computer expert, take their responsibilities very seriously. The school has worked hard, and is continuing to do so, to extend opportunities for 'pupil voice' and pupils show that they expect their views to be recognised. When they go into the local community or link with a nearby primary school, pupils act as very strong ambassadors for disability. They particularly enjoy working together in order to produce a performance for friends and family about the work they have been doing. Through opportunities such as these they begin to develop the more mature social skills which they will need in later life.

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	*
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	2
Pupils' behaviour	1
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	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The curriculum has been developed well to meet diverse learning needs of the school population. Under a common umbrella of themes, it draws together well the different elements of the National Curriculum to make learning relevant and enjoyable. Specialist approaches are used appropriately for pupils with severe autism, and the group of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties benefit from a Key Stage 1 curriculum delivered through a multi-sensory approach.

Use of information and communication technology, an issue in the last inspection, has been developed well and pupils actively participate in using the interactive whiteboards as well as the specialist sensory experiences provided in separate rooms. The extensive and attractive grounds are used well, particularly in special events such as 'Grounds Week'. Good use is made of topic-linked outings to enable pupils to develop confidence within the local community and further afield.

Teachers and support staff know the pupils very well on a personal level and the multi-disciplinary team makes a positive contribution to pupils' good progress overall. The focus upon individual work ensures that excellent progress is made in some areas, particularly in communication, personal and social development. In the whole-group lessons, however, progress is less secure. This is generally because, although individual

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

* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

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needs are planned for, they are not consistently met in practice. The high pupil-to-adult ratio, while reassuring for staff and pupils alike, sometimes hinders rather than helps progress because pupils are not left for long enough to try or practise skills for themselves. In some cases, support assistants are relied upon too heavily to 'interpret' a session which is not pitched at the right level for all pupils. As a result certain pupils are not fully included within the group. The school has rightly recognised that, while there is much good practice in teaching, this is not yet consistent enough.

There are exemplary arrangements for the care, guidance and support of pupils. A strong commitment to working with a range of agencies to sustain the learning, development and well-being of every pupil is evident. Transition for those joining and leaving the school is very well planned. For Year 6 pupils this includes an annual residential trip to the New Forest. This takes place jointly with another school and so gives the pupils the chance to get to know each other before transfer to secondary school. Parents provided many examples of when the school has supported them and their families, with comments such as 'the staff will all go the extra mile to help the children'.

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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The school's strong commitment to equality of opportunity and its drive to keep moving forward are evident in the way in which it has embraced new challenges in order to meet the needs of its changing population. The leadership and management team, although relatively new in its current form, has a very good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and has taken strategically focused actions in order to ensure its future growth and development. The progress made since its re-designation, while also addressing an inherited budget deficit of some significant size, shows the school's obvious ambition to succeed. Some staff have found the pace of change difficult and some middle leaders are who are relatively new to subject leadership are not yet fully involved in monitoring the quality of teaching and topic delivery. However, staff are committed to fulfilling their role well and a shared focus on the needs of the pupils is evident and effective at many different levels. The school plays a significant and growing role in its local community. It works hard to involve parents and has more recently and very successfully hosted an event for grandparents. Financial management is extremely rigorous and the school has used its resources very

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well to improve and enhance pupils' learning opportunities despite the financial constraints caused by both historic and current funding. Arrangements for safeguarding are secure and there is much high quality practice. Governors have an increasingly clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They are rightly proud of the school and share the headteacher's determination for its continuing development.

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	3
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	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
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

Achievement in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good and children make good progress. They show great enjoyment of the many activities which are provided both in and out of the classroom. Routines are well established and this enhances children's opportunities to be as independent as possible while feeling safe in and around the school. Children form good relationships with their key workers and all the staff. They benefit from the close attention paid to their physical, as well as their educational, needs; they enjoy playing and learning on the range of indoor and outdoor equipment and using the specialist soft-play area.

There are many elements of good provision. The Early Years Foundation Stage areas of the school provide a stimulating, challenging and attractive environment and good use is made of resources. Good one-to-one support ensures access to the many activities provided and good quality planning, tailored to the needs of each child, is well-supported by observations used to record progress. The school is aware that some information provided for parents does not quite fulfil all requirements and are rightly planning to address this. Nevertheless, the leadership and management of the Early

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Years Foundation Stage are good; recent changes to the provision have been well led and are effective.

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

Questionnaires were returned from almost half of the school's parents and carers and their response reflects the views formed by inspectors. A very small number of parents commented that teaching is variable and inspectors agree that this is so. However, the high level of satisfaction felt by parents and carers and their appreciation of the support the school offers both them and their child, were reflected in the large majority of the comments made. The following statement sums up the views of many: 'The school tries very hard to get the maximum potential out of every child whatever level they are at. Every member of staff knows my child by name. A caring and safe environment in which to learn'.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Palatine 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.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	30	75	10	25	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	32	80	8	20	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	25	63	14	35	1	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	22	55	15	38	2	5	1	3
The teaching is good at this school	29	73	11	28	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	24	60	12	30	1	3	1	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	23	58	17	43	0	0	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)	23	58	13	33	1	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	29	73	9	23	1	3	1	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	22	55	17	43	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	22	55	15	38	1	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	24	60	13	33	1	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	28	70	12	30	0	0	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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

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 were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

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.



19 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Palatine Primary School, Worthing BN12 6JP

Thank you for helping us to learn about your school. We really enjoyed our visit. It was good to meet so many of you and to see how well you are doing. I am writing this letter to tell you what we found.

Palatine School is a good school which supports you well. You all seem to enjoy school; you are safe and well cared for. We could see that you and the staff all work very hard to help you to make progress and to improve your communication. Your behaviour is excellent. There are plenty of interesting things for you to do both in and out of school. The school council told us about the good ideas that they have had and we were pleased that are helping to make things better for everyone. It was good to see how much you enjoy using the spaces you have to play and grow things in. I enjoyed watching the practices for your performances and I am sure that your families and friends will enjoy the real thing!

Your headteacher and all the staff work hard to help you. We agree with your parents and carers who said that the school does a good job. We have suggested, though, that even more could be done to make sure that you all make as much progress as you can, especially when you are doing topic and group work. We have asked the teachers to look at the way everyone works with you and to make sure that they know how well you are doing in every lesson. You can join in this, too, by telling them what you have learnt. The teachers who are in charge of different subjects can make sure that this is happening.

You can help by trying your best. I hope that you will all do well in the future.

Yours sincerely

Anne Duffy

Her Majesty's Inspector

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