

# The Pilgrim School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	134823
<b>Local Authority</b>	Medway
<b>Inspection number</b>	341534
<b>Inspection dates</b>	7–8 October 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Kevin Hodge

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	229
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mark Wilkes
<b>Headteacher</b>	Justin Smith
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	8 November 2006
<b>School address</b>	Warwick Crescent Borstal Rochester ME1 3LF
<b>Telephone number</b>	01634 335959
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 10 lessons, and held meetings with staff, governors and pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at school documents, including monitoring records, development planning and arrangements for safeguarding pupils. They also looked at questionnaires from staff and pupils, and 88 from parents.

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

- how well pupils achieve in Years 3 to 6, particularly in their writing and information and communication technology skills
- which aspects of teaching could be improved still further
- how well pupils know about others' beliefs and backgrounds and how to keep safe when using modern technology
- how senior leaders use self-evaluation to help promote further improvement.

## Information about the school

The school is a little smaller than average. It has grown in size since the last inspection which took place shortly after the school was amalgamated. The new building was completed in July 2008 and pupils moved in two months later. The school has a higher-than-average number of pupils leaving or joining other than at the normal times in the school year. The pupils are mainly from White British backgrounds. The number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. These pupils have a range of needs such as hearing, language, behaviour or physical difficulties. The school has awards for promoting pupils' healthy living and active lifestyles. An attached Early Years Foundation Unit, managed by the governors, is sited within the building and has a Nursery and one Reception class which often share the resources available.

**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

The Pilgrim School provides an effective learning experience for pupils and is a good school. Pupils and parents are rightly proud of their 'new' school and the recent changes and improvements since the last inspection. Despite the challenges of moving from old to new buildings, staff and pupils are working hard to make the most of the new facilities provided. The school's clear aims and Christian based ethos provide a secure and welcoming atmosphere where pupils thrive and contribute to a very high level. Their involvement and knowledge of the local community is well developed, although their understanding of others from differing backgrounds or beliefs, particularly in this country, is not sufficiently developed. The good spiritual, social and moral development fostered by the school results in mature, outstandingly well behaved pupils who often say that school is 'great'. The children in the Early Years Foundation Stage unit settle in well, learn effectively and children in the Nursery and Reception classes mix together well.

Not surprisingly, pupils are motivated to learn and benefit from good teaching throughout the school. This has resulted in pupils' improved attainment. The school's results have varied since opening, but have steadily improved to the point where pupils reach average levels and achieve well from their starting points in nearly all areas. The good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage lays the way for the progress made through the school. By the time pupils leave the school, they achieve well. The school has identified and targeted areas for development well, although weaker spelling, accuracy and consistency hamper the pupils' writing in Years 3 to 6. The quality of teaching is overwhelmingly good, but the school is seeking to improve it still further to the outstanding levels seen in some classes.

Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school, recognising the good levels of care and guidance fostered for all pupils, but particularly for those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. One comment that 'I am so happy with the school, my son is thriving and looks forward to school every day!' was typical of the many made. Only a very few parents expressed some pointers for improvement. This is not surprising as the school makes strenuous and effective efforts to work with parents to make them feel part of the life of the school. Despite outstanding relationships with parents, and raised attendance levels, a small number find it difficult to send their children to school regularly. Pupils say they really enjoy attending.

Underpinning the school's success is the good leadership and management of the school promoted by the headteacher, senior staff and governors. Their routines to evaluate the school's successes and areas for improvement guide the school's effective planning and priorities. Careful and increasingly detailed checks on pupils' progress are increasing the

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pace of their learning and achievement across a broad front. The school's good capacity to improve is aided by close support from governors who know the school well and are effective 'critical friends'. These factors and effective routines enable senior leaders to pinpoint where improvements are still needed.

**What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Improve pupils' confidence and ability in writing in Years 3 to 6 this coming year by:
- developing their ability to spell accurately and independently
- extending relevant and enticing opportunities for writing across the curriculum.
- Raise pupils' awareness of others with differing backgrounds and beliefs by:
- developing a link with a school in a contrasting United Kingdom locality and with pupils of differing backgrounds
- following through with the proposed link with the school in Sweden
- Consolidate improvements in attendance by:
- analysing information carefully to pinpoint those parents who need further support or reminding about the consequences of not sending their child to school regularly.

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

One pupil's comment that 'I love every minute of being here' is a real clue about how they value the school, their friends and the staff. Many pupils comment warmly about their 'new' school and they feel extremely settled and extremely safe within it. This is due to several factors. The school's clear aims and values ensure the pupils' good spiritual, social and moral development. Pupils relate extremely well to classmates and visitors and behave brilliantly, particularly when they are not directly supervised. The youngest children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are happy to be at school. Playtimes for all pupils are good social occasions with good levels of activities. Play leaders are proud of their role and already are thinking of ways to expand it further. The school council enjoys its role in influencing school improvement, and pupils' contribution to the school's and wider community is excellent. Pupils report that bananas are the current favourite on the morning playtime fruit stall and, although they are generally aware of the benefits of healthy eating, some admit that they find it hard to always make healthy choices. Although improved due to the school's efforts, attendance levels are satisfactory rather than good as a small number of pupils still attend irregularly. Not surprisingly, the pupils' outstanding behaviour and attitudes transmit into their good classwork and achievement. As a result, pupils' rates of progress have improved steadily since the last inspection, along with their attainment. A recent visit by an author inspired Year 6 pupils to write poems about imaginary 'super heroes' and Year 2 pupils enjoyed writing out simple instructions for constructing a model castle. The class visit to see it for real clearly made a mark on pupils as one said: 'You could see for miles from the top!' Pupils also achieve well in their mathematical, scientific and information and communication technology work. Pupils' achievement is good for all groups of pupils, but those with special educational needs and/or disabilities make particularly good

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progress. Pupils with physical disabilities also achieve well due to the close support they have. The level of pupils' achievement, combined with some activities to introduce pupils to the world of work, is preparing all pupils well for their next schools and later life.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

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

## How effective is the provision?

Pupils' improving achievement and attainment since the last inspection is aided and fostered by typically good teaching through the school. Most lessons are pitched at the right level and pupils respond well to activities which capture their interests. The well-planned curriculum aids teaching in this respect and helps them to devise activities around topics and themes. During the inspection, an 'enjoy and achieve' week and 'National Poetry Day' promoted pupils' appetite for writing effectively. Past work and displays reflect both the effective curriculum planning, and the teachers' use of information and communication technology, to good effect. For example, pupils' skilful use of digital cameras and word processing to write baptismal prayers reflects their confidence in this subject area. Teachers use similar technology to good effect in their teaching, often using audio visual whiteboards to capture and motivate pupils to learn.

<sup>1</sup> 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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In the Early Years Foundation Stage, good teamwork is helping children settle in quickly to new routines and achieve well.

There are relatively few improvements needed in teaching, but occasionally the reasons for doing activities are not always as well thought through or shared with pupils. Occasionally, opportunities to challenge pupils in their learning are not capitalised on as effectively as they might be and in these instances pupils' interest flags. Teachers use assessment routines effectively, and well-chosen written comments on pupils' work and in one-to-one discussions are helping pupils improve their work. Teachers are using emerging information on pupils' progress to effectively tailor their lessons and the curriculum to target specific pupils. French in Years 3 to 6 and a broad range of visits and visitors to the school further enhance learning. The good range of additional clubs promotes pupils' sporting, artistic and cultural experiences. The pupils' support for a child in Ecuador has widened and enhanced their interest in global issues, although this is an area of the curriculum that is relatively under-developed.

The pupils' care and guidance is good, but is often excellent for individual pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, who benefit greatly from clear identification of their needs and well-targeted support by skilful assistants. The pupils' general feeling that they can approach any member of staff for help and guidance is well founded. Teachers also make sure that pupils know how to use new technology safely, particularly in the use of the internet. Links with parents before pupils start school aid a smooth start in the Nursery and developing links with secondary schools are making the transfer to them productive.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

**How effective are leadership and management?**

One parent's view that their child has come on 'leaps and bounds' is reflective of what has been achieved against a backdrop of bringing two schools together into a 'new' purpose-built school. This has been guided by the clear vision of senior leaders, led effectively by a respected headteacher. Self-evaluation is based on a wide range of information and increasingly the progress pupils make is key to forming the school's priorities. Teaching quality has been a focus area to maintain and this has been successful. The monitoring is now rightly switching more to pupils' learning to identify more precisely what aspects of teaching can be 'fine tuned' to improve it further. Parents also speak appreciatively of being involved with school life and development.

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The high level of positive response in the questionnaires reflects the excellent level of involvement with the vast majority of them. Teamwork, where subjects and aspects are managed jointly by staff for example, is promoted to good effect. Despite the challenges of amalgamation, improvements to the Early Years Foundation Stage, and recent rises in pupils' attainment and improved governance, reflect the school's good capacity to improve.

Governors' improved involvement in the running of the school, while ensuring the school has a building 'fit for purpose', has clearly been a priority. They ensure the pupils' high level of safeguarding and well-being. The school has clear and effective routines, but governors are currently reviewing their safeguarding policies to spot any areas which can be strengthened or improved. Staff and governors promote community cohesion well locally and globally, but pupils' awareness of others from contrasting backgrounds in this country is a weak area of their understanding. Governors' checking of what goes on is based upon an appropriate range of information, although they are seeking to make monitoring more systematic over the year. Along with the staff, they ensure that pupils, regardless of their backgrounds or abilities, achieve equally well and are vigilant about eliminating discrimination within the school community.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

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

## **Early Years Foundation Stage**

Children settle quickly into the Nursery and Reception classes to become happy, confident learners. Good quality contact with parents before they start helps children get off to a flying start to school life. Children achieve well so that by the time they enter



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Year 1 their attainment is broadly average in most areas of learning from their below average starting points. The successful teaching of early reading and writing skills over time is improving children's confidence, particularly the boys who have occasionally lagged slightly behind. However, other areas such as creative development and knowledge of the world around them are not always developed to the same level. Children are confident speakers and have good levels of social and independent skills. They benefit from a large outdoor learning environment with contrasting areas. Children were highly excited to be digging up imaginary dinosaur bones. Other activities such as simple reading activities using audio visual whiteboards, making corn dollies for Harvest Festival and some one-to-one small groups, helped pupils learn effectively. While teaching is typically good, particularly in the way it merges activities between Nursery and Reception children, some opportunities are missed to extend the children's learning. For example, although boys were active on their wheeled toys, they did not have enough guidance in directing their play or imagination to extend the experience. The leadership of this aspect of the school's work is good, and although new to the role, the leader has a good grasp of the strengths and areas to improve. High levels of welfare underpin the work of the Early Years Foundation Stage and staff work effectively with parents and agencies to support children's personal and academic development.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
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**

Parents have an overwhelmingly positive view of the school. They readily point to the benefits of the new 'fantastic', 'excellent' school and the wide range of activities that it offers. There were very few comments which were critical. These often pointed to things which might be better and were offered as constructive criticisms. A very small number tended to be related to their individual child, but 'better school dinners', 'not enough contact with teachers' and 'more guidance on homework' were mentioned. Inspectors did not find evidence to substantiate these concerns. School dinners seemed to be liked by pupils very much and appeared to be of a typical standard. Two after-school parents' evenings held during the inspection gave parents good opportunities to meet their child's new teacher and the school appeared to give the normal amount of guidance on homework. The school is hoping to develop an internet-based 'learning platform' which is likely to include guidance for both pupils and parents.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Pilgrim 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 88 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 229 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	81	92	6	7	0	0	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	75	84	12	14	1	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	59	67	25	28	3	3	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	65	74	18	21	0	0	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	70	80	16	18	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	62	71	22	25	1	1	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	65	74	17	19	3	3	1	1
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)	57	65	24	27	5	6	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	63	72	22	25	1	1	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	58	66	25	28	3	3	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	57	65	29	33	0	0	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	76	85	8	9	0	0	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	75	84	12	14	1	1	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"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
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.**



9 October 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Pilgrim School, Rochester, ME1 3LF

I am writing to let you know about the findings from the inspection we carried out recently. The vast majority of your parents and carers think your school is good and we agree.

Here are some of the things we found out.

- The youngest children settle in the Nursery and Reception class well and are enjoying all of the activities that take place. They even found dinosaur bones in their digging area!
- All of you behave brilliantly and try hard in lessons.
- Most of you reach the expected levels when you leave and achieve well in most aspects of your work.
- You are good at keeping active at playtimes.
- The staff really work hard and effectively to make your parents and carers feel part of what goes on in the school.
- The range of things you do such as French and sports competitions sound exciting.
- The school helps those of you who sometimes find work difficult or have a particular physical difficulty to achieve really well.
- The teaching is usually good, and sometimes outstanding, which helps you to learn well.
- You all said that you feel really safe and can ask for help because staff care about you well. We agree with you!

We have asked the school to do three things to help it improve further:

- give those of you in Years 3 to 6 help to improve your writing by helping you spell more accurately
- develop more links with other schools so you get to find out about other children who live in a different type of area or who are a bit different to you
- to remind some parents and carers about the importance of you attending school as regularly as possible.

You can help your teachers by keeping up your excellent behaviour and encouraging classmates to come to school everyday!

Yours faithfully

Kevin Hodge

Lead inspector

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