

Platt Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Maidstone Road, St Mary's Platt, Sevenoaks, Kent, TN15 8JY

Inspection dates	21–22 October 2015
Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher provides excellent leadership for the school. Her vision for the school's future is shared by all her staff and by the governors.
- Teaching has improved so that pupils make faster progress than before and achieve well.
- Teachers have consistently high expectations of all pupils. They give them challenging and stimulating work which ignites their interest in learning.
- Pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Year 6 pupils' overall attainment has improved since the previous inspection.
- Pupils achieve particularly well in writing with Year 6 pupils attaining well above the national average in 2015.
- Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 is consistently higher than the national average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The proportion of pupils attaining higher levels increased at the end of both key stages in 2015 in all subjects.
- The school's strong community and caring ethos underpins its work. The promotion of pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- The governing body provides effective support and challenge for school leaders.
- Pupils play an active part in school life, behave well and feel extremely safe and secure.
- By Year 6, pupils are thoroughly prepared for the next stage of their education. The oldest pupils in the school are responsible and hardworking.
- Leaders and teachers work very well with parents to support pupils' achievement and personal development. Parents are highly positive about the school's work.
- Good-quality teaching and strong relationships in early years set the tone for children's experience of school. Children make good progress and achieve well by the end of Reception Year.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils make slightly slower progress in mathematics problem solving. Not all teachers are confident about teaching pupils how to solve mathematical problems.
- Activities in the early years outdoor area are not always of the same high quality as those in the classroom.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement to the highest levels in mathematics by making sure that all teachers can confidently explain to pupils how to tackle mathematical problems.
- Make sure that activities in the outdoor area are as stimulating and enticing as those in the classroom.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

is good

- The headteacher has brought much-needed stability and ambition to the school since her appointment. She leads the school with quiet confidence and absolute dedication to ensuring that all pupils achieve their best. She leads by example, taking her staff with her as the school continues to improve.
- Parents are pleased with developments in the school since the previous inspection. One said, 'Since the headteacher joined the school we have seen improvement, direction, progress and consistency in all areas.'
- The headteacher and governors have very successfully steered the school through a period of rapid change, including numerous staff changes. The school is now in a much more settled phase and staff morale is high.
- Leaders and teachers frequently check how well pupils are learning and so are very clear about pupils' needs. They quickly spot those in need of extra help and provide effective support.
- All the subject leaders have been appointed since the previous inspection. Their roles have developed rapidly in the past year. They have regular opportunities to observe teaching, to talk to pupils about their work and to meet with senior leaders to discuss pupils' progress. They have completed appropriate plans for developments in their subjects. However, these are at an early stage of development and are not always focused sharply enough on raising achievement. Leaders have already identified this as the next stage for subject leaders' professional development and improvements are well in hand.
- Leaders provide good-quality support for those teachers who are new to the profession so that they are confident about their role. For example, these teachers visited the school to get to know staff and pupils and learn about safeguarding procedures before taking up their positions as class teachers in September. This ensured a smooth transition into their new roles.
- The quality of artwork is a particular strength of the school. Teachers give pupils many opportunities to be creative. For example, pupils recently studied fungi in the local woods, producing closely observed drawings and finding out about the scientific aspects of fungi structure.
- The school's work makes a strong contribution to the development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school's strong community and religious ethos is very evident during worship times, with a Year 6 pupil greeting the school at the start and reading the final prayer. Pupils feel comfortable about making contributions during worship times and give thoughtful responses to questions raised. For example, when considering what it feels like to lack confidence, one suggested, 'It makes you feel like you want to disappear'.
- Pupils learn about a variety of beliefs. Special events contribute to pupils' enjoyment of school and to their respect for different cultures and faiths. The school's recent involvement, with other schools, in a 'Festival of Light' project gave pupils the opportunity to work with an artist to make lanterns and learn more about Diwali.
- Leaders have recently introduced more opportunities for pupils to use and apply mathematical knowledge to solve problems. This ensures pupils are making better progress in mathematics. However, these improvements are at an early stage, with more time needed to make sure they are fully established in all classes.
- Pupil premium funding supports eligible pupils effectively. For example, some has been used to provide support for their emotional well-being. This has played a key part in pupils' learning, helping them to engage fully during lessons.
- The primary sports premium has been used well to improve the quality of physical education teaching. A recent survey indicated that teachers are more confident about teaching physical education after working with a sports coach. A new system for assessing pupils' progress is popular with the pupils because it helps them to understand what they can do to improve their fitness levels and sports skills. Leaders have doubled the number of clubs provided for pupils and these are well attended. The school has participated in more sports competitions over the past year, including cross-country, skiing, football and rounders.
- Representatives from the local authority and diocese have worked closely with the school during a period of many changes. They have given leaders and governors good-quality support and advice, such as training for governors about how to check pupils are achieving well and for staff in the teaching of religious education. The local authority and diocese have complete and well-placed confidence in the headteacher to secure further improvements.

- The school regularly celebrates and promotes British values. For example, the older pupils have weekly debates about topical issues such as whether school uniform should be worn. A recent project involved pupils finding out about members of their family who had been involved in the World Wars. The final book, in which pupils are photographed holding photographs of family members, is a moving tribute to the part their relatives played in past conflicts and gives pupils a sense of their own personal history.
- Leaders and teachers have developed the way subjects are taught so that learning is purposeful. The focus on developing pupils' confidence and pride in their work is a particular strength and is evident in pupils' positive attitudes to school. The curriculum is well supplemented by a range of optional clubs, including cookery, craft and choir.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The governing body plays a much more effective role in the school's leadership than at the time of the previous inspection. Governors now check the school's work rigorously and systematically. They use regular meetings with leaders to ask sensible questions about pupils' achievement and about how well teaching is helping pupils to make good progress. They know how the school is performing in relation to other schools and are clear about the most important priorities in the next stage of its development.
 - Governors know how leaders use funds, such as the pupil premium, to support pupils' achievement and personal development. They know that the sport premium has improved the quality of physical education teaching.
 - The headteacher's comprehensive reports ensure governors know about the quality of teaching in the school and about aspects being developed further. Governors know how leaders have challenged weaker teaching in the past and how support and training helps teachers to improve their practice. They work with the headteacher to check that salary awards are suitable.
 - The appointment of the current headteacher was an astute and timely step for the governors to take, bringing a more settled phase to the school and increasing the pace of improvement.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Policies and procedures are rigorously maintained. Staff and governors are well qualified, including training in recognising the risks of extremism and radicalisation. Leaders ensure recruitment checks are complete and well maintained. The school site is tidy and orderly.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

is good

- Confident, imaginative and lively teaching ensures that most pupils are enthused about learning. For example, during the inspection, one pupil explained that he and his friend had come in at lunchtime because they were keen to get on with their mathematics work on angles.
- Teachers have consistently high expectations of all pupils. They set work which challenges them all to think hard and to do their best.
- Teachers use thought-provoking books in lessons to successfully stimulate pupils' interest and help them to reflect on experiences beyond school. A Year 6 pupil explained that a class book about a child with a facial disfigurement made you think about how you respond to people in the street.
- Teachers make sure pupils frequently write for many different purposes, such as performance poetry, autobiography and story writing, so that they have the skills and experience to write consistently well.
- Adults are well qualified in teaching phonics. Phonics skills are consistently taught effectively by teachers and teaching assistants in early years and Key Stage 1. They make sure pupils learn new sounds at a brisk rate and give them plenty of opportunities to put their knowledge into practice through a range of reading and writing activities.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are fully involved in lessons and well supported to produce good-quality work. Teachers ensure that they have a range of tools to help them in their learning, including specialist dictionaries for those with dyslexia. Teaching assistants contribute well to pupils' learning by providing quiet, well-timed support.
- Teachers are confident about teaching most aspects of mathematics and do so well. However, while they have introduced more opportunities for pupils to tackle mathematical problems, a few are not quite as confident about teaching pupils this mathematical skill. Leaders know that this aspect of teaching needs strengthening. They have arranged relevant training to ensure all teachers are equipped with the expertise needed to teach problem solving more effectively.

- Teachers mark pupils' work consistently and regularly, in line with the school's policy. They give pupils helpful hints about what they can do next to improve their learning. Pupils routinely follow up these suggestions by, for example, replying to teachers' questions, or having a go at the additional challenges teachers set.
- Classrooms are positive and attractive places for pupils to learn. Teachers display pupils' work carefully and imaginatively so that their achievements are celebrated.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. Pupils are extremely proud of their work and of their school. They look extremely smart in their new uniform.
- Pupils feel extremely safe and cared for in school. They have absolute confidence in their teachers to look after them. Pupils know, for example, that every day their teachers check 'The Listening Ear' (a box provided for them to post notes about any concerns they may have) and follow up any worries immediately. One summed up the school's strongly inclusive and caring ethos when she said, 'If you have any worries or you feel down someone will always help you. Everyone cares for each other. We're like a family.'
- Pupils say their teachers regularly remind them about how to keep safe. For example, they say that assemblies are used to reinforce road safety messages, while internet safety days and posters displayed around the school help them to think about e-safety. Pupils know what to do if they see anything which troubles them when using the computers, including how to report incidents to the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre. Events such as 'anti-bullying week' ensure pupils are clear about how harmful bullying can be and about what to do if they are worried.
- The school has developed a consistent and successful approach to enhance pupils' learning habits, called 'Platt's Tools'. This approach is helping pupils to be more confident about attempting more difficult tasks, for example in mathematics, without worrying about making a mistake. Pupils cooperate very well together during lessons.
- Pupils play a valued role in the life of the school. They are regularly involved in decisions, such as whether ties should be part of the school uniform. The oldest pupils are an asset to the school, performing their roles of responsibility sensibly and seriously. These pupils provide consistently strong role models for the younger pupils.
- All parents who completed the online questionnaire feel that their children are happy, safe and well looked after in school. One commented, 'Our children always come home with smiles.'

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils behave exceptionally well during breaktimes and when moving between lessons. Most parents who completed the online questionnaire feel pupils are well behaved.
- At lunchtime, pupils wait quietly and patiently for their lunch in the school hall. They are polite and choose where to sit without fuss. They speak respectfully to adults and to each other and their table manners are excellent.
- The midday supervisors contribute very well to the positive atmosphere in the lunch hall. For example, one greets pupils individually as they enter the hall. They are very much part of the school team and well respected by all pupils.
- Pupils enjoy school and feel most behave well. They like earning rewards, such as the 'mega-stars' awarded by their teachers for excellent behaviour and positive attitudes to learning. One pupil said that she loved having tea and cake with the headteacher recently as a special reward for consistently good work and behaviour.
- Leaders make sure that behaviour records are rigorously maintained. There are very few incidents of poor behaviour and bullying is rare. Leaders' actions are proportionate and very prompt. Parents are quickly contacted where appropriate so that they are fully informed and involved. Records show that the headteacher, in particular, listens carefully to parents' views and values their contribution.
- Occasionally during lessons a few pupils find it difficult to stay focused, particularly when the work is very challenging, so that their attention wanders.
- Pupils attend regularly and arrive punctually. Attendance has improved and is above the national

average.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Pupils like to learn new things and make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. By the end of Year 6 they are very securely equipped with the knowledge, skills and attitudes they will need in the next stage of their education. All parents who completed the online questionnaire feel their children are making good progress. Pupils' overall attainment lifted to above-average levels at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2015, continuing the upward trend since the previous inspection.
- Pupils achieve particularly well in writing. In 2015, pupils in Year 2 attained above national averages, while pupils' attainment in Year 6 was much higher than average. Pupils are keen to improve their work, learning how to check and change aspects of their writing to increase its effect. Throughout the school, they confidently use resources such as word banks and dictionaries, to help them to complete their writing. By Year 6, pupils are accomplished writers. For example, during the inspection Year 6 pupils of all abilities concentrated very hard to produce very high-quality atmospheric descriptions of a brooding forest. The work in their books indicates that they regularly produce work of a similar standard.
- In 2015, pupils' attainment in mathematics was in line with the national average at the end of Year 2 and above average at the end of Year 6. However, pupils lack confidence when solving mathematical problems and do not always know how to unravel them successfully. Recently, more opportunities for pupils to use and apply their mathematical knowledge to solve problems have quickened their progress. They are becoming more self-assured about using mathematics in a wider range of contexts. The work in their books suggests a deepening understanding of mathematical concepts. However, these improvements are not yet fully established in all classes and need to be strengthened further.
- Pupils like to read. They read often and widely in school. This helps them to develop personal tastes for different books and authors as they move up through the school. In 2015, pupils' attainment in reading was average at both key stages. However, while some found the national tests difficult, progress information and the work in pupils' books points to their securely good progress.
- In 2014, the results of the Year 1 phonics check were above average. Results dipped in 2015 to just below the national average. The results were affected by the influx of a number of pupils just prior to the phonics check, several of whom needed extra help with phonics and reading. Since then, individual teaching for these pupils has successfully addressed previous gaps in their phonics knowledge.
- The most-able pupils in the school make good progress. The proportions of pupils attaining the higher levels at the end of both key stages (Level 3 at Key Stage 1 and Level 5 at Key Stage 2) were above average in reading, writing and mathematics in 2015. In addition, the proportions of pupils attaining Level 6, the highest level possible at the end of Year 6, were also above average in writing and mathematics.
- There are very few disadvantaged pupils in each year group, so their attainment and progress are not reported here in detail. However, across the school most in this group make similar progress to their classmates and sometimes better.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are well supported and make good progress. A number of pupils with dyslexic tendencies make particularly good progress and are rightly proud of their achievements, particularly in writing.

Early years provision

is good

- Children settle into school routines quickly in early years. Adults make sure they feel safe and secure in school so they rapidly grow in self-esteem and make new friends. For example, one child explained that she had made a friendship bracelet for her friend because 'she is kind and we look after each other'.
- Children are interested in learning and behave very well. They are polite and welcoming to visitors. For example, on being thanked for holding the door open for the inspector, one replied, 'You're most welcome!'
- Children make good progress during early years. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development at the end of Reception was above average in 2014, with a further increase in 2015. This level of achievement ensures children are well prepared for learning in Year 1.
- Early years provision is well led by the headteacher and early years leader. The headteacher managed a

number of staff changes very effectively last year, so that children continued to make good progress despite an unsettled time for the school. Current staffing arrangements are stable and effective. Safeguarding arrangements are up-to-date and appropriate.

- Adults use questions well to guide children's learning. For example, when a group of children were building a route for their conkers, using pieces of gutter, a teaching assistant helped them to think about how to overcome difficulties so that they persevered.
- Adults teach phonics skills confidently. Children listen hard so that they can hear how different sounds are pronounced and quickly develop the skills needed to read and write successfully.
- Effective teaching ensures children make good progress in their academic and social development. Adults have high expectations of all children, including the most able. They make sure that activities stretch and challenge children sufficiently.
- Teachers check that children have good-quality resources and equipment to use in the outdoor area. However, the activities in this area are not as enticing or exciting as those provided in the classroom. This means that children are a little more reliant on adults to help them to decide what to do and so they make slightly slower progress here than in the classroom.

School details

Unique reference number	118728
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10006376

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

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	109
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Vallance
Headteacher	Hannah Walters
Telephone number	01732 882596
Website	www.platt.kent.sch.uk
Email address	office@platt.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	27–28 June 2013

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is below that found in most schools. The pupil premium is additional government funding to support those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and looked after children.
- Most pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school provides full-time early years provision in one Reception class.
- There is a private nursery and a breakfast club on site, both of which are inspected separately.
- The headteacher was appointed in September 2013. All subject leaders have been appointed since the previous inspection.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed learning in 11 lessons or part lessons, including eight with the headteacher.
- The inspector held discussions with the headteacher, senior leaders, teachers, members of staff, parents and pupils. A meeting was also held with the Chair of the Governing Body and one other governor.
- The inspector took account of 50 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as 17 staff questionnaires. In addition, she considered the views expressed by parents who spoke with her informally at the end of the school day.
- The inspector observed the school's work and considered a range of documents, including the school's improvement plan, information about pupils' progress, attendance records and safeguarding policies.
- The inspector looked at a sample of pupils' work provided by the school, as well as looking at pupils' work in lessons. She listened to pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 reading.

Inspection team

Julie Sackett, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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