

The Pilgrim School

Warwick Crescent, Rochester, ME1 3LF

Inspection dates 17–18 March 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Early years provision		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- The outstanding leaders, managers and governors are having a very positive impact on teaching and pupils' progress. Leaders are not complacent and the school continues to improve very quickly.
- Leaders at all levels, including the governors, are passionate about the school and put the pupils' achievement and well-being first in all they do.
- The headteacher and other leaders provide very effective support for other schools in the local area.
- Governance is highly effective. Governors are proactive in suggesting improvements and are fully involved in checking up on how well the school is doing.
- The school has an outstanding partnership with its parents. Parents are delighted with the school and feel very well informed.
- Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They are exceptionally keen to learn and are very kind and caring.
- There are exceptionally thorough systems for protecting the pupils and keeping them safe. As a result, pupils feel very safe and are very knowledgeable about how to stay safe.
- The exciting and purposeful curriculum ensures that pupils are very keen to come to school and to learn.
- There is excellent provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, enabling pupils to become well-rounded and thoughtful young citizens.
- The school promotes British values, such as tolerance and respect, especially well because members of staff are excellent role models and expectations for behaviour are very high.
- Excellent teaching motivates the pupils to learn. The teachers' very good subject knowledge is shared very well with the pupils.
- Children have an exceptionally good start to their education in the early years provision. They make outstanding progress and are especially enthusiastic about learning outside in the 'Forest School'.
- Pupils' achievement is outstanding. They make excellent progress across the school from their different starting points.
- The school includes disadvantaged pupils, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, exceptionally well in all activities, enabling them to be very successful.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed teaching and learning in 17 lessons, of which four were observed jointly with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with leaders, teachers, pupils and members of the governing body.
- The inspection team took into account the 87 responses to the online survey (Parent View) and two letters from parents and carers. The team also held informal discussions with a number of parents.
- The inspection team considered the views expressed in the survey responses from 31 members of staff.
- A range of documentation supplied by the school was scrutinised, including the school's own information about how well pupils are doing, planning documents, checks on the quality of teaching, the school development plan, and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding procedures.

Inspection team

Alison Cartlidge, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Bill James

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Pilgrim School is an average-sized primary school.
- There is a part-time Nursery and a full-time Reception class in the early years provision.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium is broadly average. This is additional funding for disadvantaged pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above average. These pupils are not evenly distributed across year groups.
- The headteacher is supporting four other schools in the local area.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make sure that teachers take every opportunity to fully extend and deepen the learning of the most-able pupils.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The outstanding headteacher and senior leaders provide a very clear direction for the work of the school. Other members of staff are very committed to achieving the shared goals. There is a very strong sense of working as a team. Leaders celebrate and share strengths in teaching and learning, and even minor areas for improvement are tackled robustly.
- Leaders also help to support four other schools in the local area and there is clear evidence that this is having a positive impact.
- Leaders, including middle leaders, have established a very positive climate for learning and excellent relationships with pupils. Teaching and pupils' behaviour flourish because the motivation of all members of the school community to secure success by pupils is exceptionally strong. Extending pupils' personal and academic achievement is at the heart of all the school offers.
- The school strongly discourages discrimination of any kind and gives pupils equal opportunities to succeed, irrespective of their background or abilities. The additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is used exceptionally well. One-to-one support and subsidised access to various activities enable these pupils to do as well as other pupils both academically and socially.
- There are very rigorous systems in place to check up on how well teachers are doing and to support them in developing their knowledge and skills further. For example, staff training on improving the quality of marking has had a lasting impact. Teachers use marking very well to support and extend the pupils' learning. Leaders have a wealth of information on how well the pupils are doing and use this effectively to ensure that all pupils make rapid progress.
- The new curriculum is well developed and supports learning very effectively across all subjects. Consequently, pupils do very well in all subjects, including reading, writing and mathematics. Additional activities such as 'university week' enrich provision by making use of teachers' areas of expertise to provide pupils with access to new experiences. For example, pupils can learn new skills in horse riding, archery and cookery.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development exceptionally well. Pupils have very good opportunities to learn about British values. For example, in collective worship, pupils successfully drew comparisons between the school rules, the Ten Commandments and British values.
- The extra funding for physical education and sport is having a very positive impact. The school spends this funding on ensuring that all pupils learn to swim and develop various sport skills such as ball control and stamina. The funding has had a positive impact on the uptake of sports clubs, pupils' fitness and their success in inter-school competitions.
- Arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements. There are exemplary systems for checking up on any concerns and members of staff are thoroughly investigated before appointment. They are also very well trained to care for the pupils. The school has established close links with the parents so that responsibility for the pupils' safety is shared. Members of staff are very vigilant in ensuring that pupils are protected and kept safe.
- The local authority and diocesan advisors have a positive impact on improving the school. They provide an appropriate level of support so that the school has become highly successful.
- The school's partnership with parents is exemplary. Parents are delighted that their children come to this school and make comments such as 'Leadership is excellent' and 'The school is a lovely protective little bubble'.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is very effective. Governors are passionate about the school and provide very strong challenge and support in equal measure. They are very knowledgeable about what works well and why, and about the systems in place to ensure that members of staff continue to develop rapidly, including the use of appraisal.
 - Governors know how good teaching is at the school, what is being done to reward the best teaching and how minor areas for improvement are being supported. Governors are keen that school leaders should demonstrate the impact of improvements on the pupils' learning. They understand how well the school does in comparison with other schools.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding**Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Their behaviour at playtimes and when moving around the school is exemplary. Pupils are very positive about other pupils' behaviour at the school. Parents and members of staff agree that pupils' conduct is always very good. Pupils are very keen to learn and their attendance is above average.
- Pupils are very good at taking responsibility for helping others and for improving their own work. For example, older pupils act as buddies and play leaders for younger pupils. Pupils work together well in class, discussing how they can make their work better.
- There is a very positive atmosphere in the school. The extent of bullying is minimal and the school deals very swiftly with any instance of bullying.
- Pupils have excellent attitudes towards learning. They try hard and are keen to do their best. They are very attentive in class and only occasionally stop listening. On the rare occasions that this happens, it is because they are keen to carry on with their work instead.
- Pupils show great respect for the beliefs and views of others and know what it means to be 'a good citizen' and how to treat other people well.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Pupils feel very safe at school and are very knowledgeable about how to stay safe. They are especially aware of the importance of staying safe when using the internet.
- Pupils have a very good understanding of the importance of keeping safe if approached by a stranger and know who they should trust. They know that they should talk to a parent or a member of staff straightaway if they have any concerns.
- Pupils are very knowledgeable about the different types of bullying and why bullying is unacceptable.
- Teachers regularly remind pupils about the need to take care to stay safe. In a science lesson in Year 4, for instance, pupils were aware of the need to be careful when carrying out investigations. For example, they knew that light bulbs can get hot and that electricity can be dangerous.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Teachers have an excellent impact on the pupils' learning and achievement, including in their teaching of reading, writing and mathematics. Teachers are very skilled at making learning motivating and use a range of ideas to maintain the pupils' interest. For example, in a literacy lesson in Year 3, pupils enjoyed acting out parts of the story 'Theseus and the Minotaur' to help them understand how they could make use of powerful verbs in their writing. As a result, they were able to replace mundane words such as 'said' with more powerful words, such as 'pleaded' or 'vowed'.
- Teachers and teaching assistants form very strong working relationships with the pupils. Consequently, mutual respect is evident in classes and pupils are keen to try hard and to persevere. Teachers manage behaviour well because there are very clear expectations for the pupils and clearly defined class rules.
- Teachers provide very clear advice on how pupils can do better next time and pupils are fully involved in discussing how to improve their work by editing and correcting it. They appreciate the 'learning ladders' that point out what they are to learn next in child-friendly language. As one pupil said, 'They tell you what you need to learn.'
- Teachers have a thorough knowledge of their subjects. The school makes effective use of teachers' particular areas of expertise. For example, in Years 5 and 6, teachers swap classes for mathematics and English. The specialist teaching of French is also very strong. As a result, pupils in Year 3, for instance, made rapid progress when learning how to talk about themselves and where they live.
- The provision for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is excellent. Their specific needs are quickly identified. They receive focused support in lessons and additional teaching when needed.
- Teachers frequently set homework and this supports learning very well, especially in reading, spelling and mathematics.
- Most work is appropriately challenging for the different groups of pupils, such as the mathematical problem-solving observed in a Year 6 lesson. Very occasionally, teachers do not challenge the most-able as much as they could in order that these pupils consistently deepen their knowledge and understanding

throughout each lesson.

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Pupils make outstanding progress in all year groups, as seen in lessons, in their workbooks and in the school's information on how well they are doing.
- Attainment has risen across the school. In 2014, it was above average in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make excellent progress. Their needs are very thoroughly assessed and activities to support their learning are very well judged.
- Disadvantaged pupils make accelerated progress that is similar to that of other pupils at the school. Any gaps in their attainment are slight and closing rapidly. In 2014, they were about a term behind other pupils at the school in reading and ahead of other pupils nationally. They were ahead of other pupils at the school and nationally in writing. In mathematics, they were only half a term behind others at the school and nationally.
- Reading is a particular strength of the school. In 2014, the results of pupils in Year 1 were above average in the phonics screening check (which checks pupils' knowledge of the links between letters and the sounds they make). Pupils in Year 2 read fluently and with great enjoyment. One pupil made clear his appreciation of books by saying 'I'm a fan' and another said that she read well 'by reading a lot'. Pupils read widely and often and make very effective use of their literacy and numeracy skills to support their learning in other subjects.
- The most-able pupils do well over time and work set for them provides the right level of challenge in most lessons. Very occasionally, pupils do not deepen their knowledge and understanding as well as they could.
- Pupils are very well prepared for the next stage of education and later life.

The early years provision

is outstanding

- Most children are working at levels below those typical for their age when they join the school in the Nursery. They make excellent progress during their time in the early years provision, so that their achievement is outstanding. Attainment on entry to Year 1 has been rising and is now broadly average. This means the children are prepared very well for the next stage of their education.
- Children do especially well in learning how to manage their feelings, with the result that they behave very well. Children have a very clear understanding of class routines and respond very quickly to signals for 'good looking, good listening and good sitting'. They gain confidence during their time in the Nursery and Reception classes. They are very keen to explain what they are learning and to help each other. One child was eager to add that they also needed 'good thinking' to help them to learn.
- The children's behaviour is exemplary. They show their awareness of British values when they respect each other's ideas and are tolerant as they wait for a turn to speak. For example, children listened carefully as others explained which woodland plant or creature they had chosen to represent that day.
- Teaching is excellent. Teachers and teaching assistants are very knowledgeable about the needs of young children. They use this knowledge exceptionally well to plan work that is relevant, extends learning and is motivating. For example, children developed their hand control very effectively because the teacher provided them with a range of materials with increasingly harder challenges. This improved their skills of manipulation.
- Very good use is made of every opportunity to build further on skills already learned. For example, children were encouraged to count in fives when they were discussing how they would be developing the muscles in their fingers during 'mighty muscle' time.
- The curriculum provides a very wide variety of purposeful activities across all the areas of learning. A particular strength in provision is the delightful 'Forest School', where children learn about nature and the properties of materials. Educational displays around the unit are attractive and are closely linked to the children's interests.
- There is a great emphasis on keeping safe. Children are very knowledgeable about why they should be careful not to touch fungus and how to climb down the ladder steps safely when working outside. Consequently, children feel very safe at school and know how to stay safe.
- Leadership and management are outstanding. Leaders contribute towards helping other schools in the local area to improve their early years provision. Leaders know what aspects of provision would benefit from minor fine-tuning. There are very productive links with parents, who are fully involved in their

children's education.

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	134823
Local authority	Medway
Inspection number	449778

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	238
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mark Wilkes
Headteacher	Janet Taylor
Date of previous school inspection	7–8 October 2009
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