

Pluckley Church of England Primary Academy

The Street, Pluckley, Ashford, TN27 0QS

Inspection dates 23–24 June 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected as an academy
	This inspection:	Good 2
Leadership and management	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2
Early years provision	Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher, well supported by staff and governors, leads the school well. Together, they have successfully led the school through the change to academy status. The headteacher effectively combines her role with supporting another nearby school.
- The early years provision is outstanding. The outdoor early years learning area has improved significantly over time. Children are extremely confident in learning social and other key skills.
- Pupils achieve well. They often reach higher than expected levels in national test results.
- Pupils' behaviour is typically good. Pupils speak to adults and to each other respectfully. They say they feel safe in school. Attendance has improved since the academy opened and is now above average.
- The quality of teaching is typically good throughout the school. As a result, pupils enjoy their learning, make good progress, and speak highly of their teachers. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, as well as those who are eligible for additional funding, achieve well.
- Governors are keen and able to identify ways the school can improve still further. By challenging school leaders, they have helped to improve the quality of teaching and to raise pupils' achievement.
- Pupils say they really enjoy the wide range of sports in which they now take part. They are particularly proud of a recent award recognising the school's success in promoting sports activities.
- Most parents are very positive about the education and care which the school provides for their children.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils are not always as accurate as they could be in their spelling and punctuation in Years 3 to 5.
- Sometimes, pupils are not fully confident in explaining their mathematical reasoning in Years 1 to 6.
- Work in pupils' books is not always carefully presented in Years 3 to 6.
- Pupils do not know enough about the differing backgrounds and cultures of others in contrasting areas of this country.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed nine lessons or part lessons, of which six were joint observations with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with a group of pupils, the Chair and other members of the Governing Body, the headteacher and other senior staff. Additionally, the inspector met with a representative from the academy chain and the executive headteacher.
- The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school's own information on pupils' current progress, its planning and checks on the quality of teaching and assessment, the new curriculum, records relating to behaviour and attendance and documents relating to safeguarding.
- The 36 responses from the Ofsted online Parent View survey were also considered. The inspector spoke to several parents when they brought their children to school and considered the responses to a parental questionnaire recently conducted by the school. The inspector took account of the 11 staff questionnaires completed during the inspection.
- The inspector listened to a small number of Year 2 and Year 6 pupils reading.

Inspection team

Kevin Hodge, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This rurally located school is much smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Very few pupils are at an early stage of learning English.
- Children attend the early years provision full time. Reception children are taught in a mixed-aged class with Year 1 pupils. Other classes also include pupils from more than one age group.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is below average.
- The school converted to an academy at the beginning of April 2012, sponsored by The Kemnal Academy Trust (TKAT). When its predecessor school, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- The school runs a morning activity-based club that takes place before school starts.
- The headteacher is also the headteacher of Smarden Primary School. There is a joint governing body which oversees the work of both schools. Staff from the two schools share training, resources and personnel when appropriate. There is an executive headteacher employed by TKAT who also oversees both schools, as well as others in the academy chain.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and looked after children) is very low.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement in the school by ensuring that:
 - teaching helps pupils in Years 1 to 6 to spell and punctuate their writing consistently well
 - pupils are more confident in explaining how they arrive at an answer when investigating or solving mathematical problems in Years 1 to 6
 - pupils' work is presented to a higher standard in Years 3 to 6.
- Develop pupils' awareness and understanding of others in this country that have different backgrounds and other beliefs to their own.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, ably supported by both by the staff and the governors, has successfully established this new school in the relatively short time since it became an academy. Together, they have maintained its caring, family atmosphere, while also ensuring that pupils achieve well. School leaders have created a culture in which good teaching and behaviour can thrive.
- Staff in this small school have many roles and responsibilities. These are managed effectively, although some staff are more experienced in their roles as middle leaders (those often responsible for subjects or year groups) than others. They work effectively with their partner school to share expertise and training when needed. These close links also help senior leaders to provide practical support, such as sharing or developing policies.
- Good coordination of the support provided for pupils who have special educational needs means their needs are identified quickly, aided by effective links with outside professionals. This widens the expertise available to staff to help improve pupils' learning.
- Very good use is made of the primary sport premium to promote a wide range of sporting opportunities and involvement. The school's recent successes in local competitions and sports festivals, together with gaining a gold award for promoting sport, reflect the school's commitment to increasing pupils' skills. The introduction of a greater variety of sports has raised activity levels for a large number of pupils and broadened the range of different types of sporting activity from which they benefit.
- Most parents are very supportive of the school and the work it does. Many highlight the caring approach of staff, their children's enjoyment of lessons and close links with the community. A small number would like to see pupils' behaviour improve further or their individual children supported better at times. Inspection evidence indicates that pupils' behaviour is good and that pupils are cared for well.
- The school uses additional funding well for the benefit of disadvantaged pupils. Pupils benefit from extra support in class, small groups and one-to-one tuition. This ensures that they keep pace with others in the school and nationally.
- Senior leaders monitor the quality of teaching closely. The headteacher and senior staff set clear expectations that the quality of teaching results in improvements in pupils' learning. Staff are clear that salary increases are closely linked to the progress of pupils.
- The range of subjects taught, as well as a particular emphasis on themes such as countries around the world and sporting achievement, ensures that pupils have a broad experience in their learning and development of key skills. Well-organised activities help pupils develop secure writing skills, although some pupils in Years 3 to 5 still find consistently good spelling and punctuation difficult to maintain in their day-to-day work. In mathematics, activities cover number-based topics well. Opportunities for pupils in Years 1 to 6 to use or develop their reasoning skills in different ways are not always sufficiently well developed. Activities for children in the Reception class cover all the required areas highly effectively.
- The school prepares its pupils well for life in modern Britain. A recent whole-school focus on developing pupils' understanding of British history, British values, and leaders' roles and responsibilities has been effective. For example, the front fence of the school displays a wide variety of pupils' work illustrating the meaning of British values, such as democracy. Pupils know the similarities and differences in the customs and traditions of others living abroad. They are not quite so clear about differences and similarities in cultures and beliefs represented in the wider United Kingdom. Assemblies, held in the adjacent church, help reinforce the school's Christian ethos and teaching.
- The academy chain provides good support to the school. The executive headteacher is a familiar face in the school and provides a good sounding board for the headteacher, associate headteacher and assistant headteacher, when discussing and resolving issues that occur.
- All staff, supported by the governors, ensure that safeguarding routines meet all statutory requirements. Site security is of a high standard and is reviewed regularly. Routines for checking on staff appointments are very thorough and detailed. Regular reminders are given to staff, pupils and parents about the potential dangers posed by the internet.
- Staff, governors and pupils work together effectively to treat all those attending equally so that they have the same chance of success. Staff and governors do not tolerate discrimination of any kind. This filters through to pupils who normally treat others fairly, despite occasional fallouts or disagreements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors give school leaders good support. They regularly review their systems to ensure they gather enough information to be able to gauge the progress that the school makes. Committees are formed informally when required to address any issues that need resolving.

- Governors are clearly aware of how the quality of teaching links to salary progression and of the performance of the school compared to others locally and nationally. They know how the management of teachers' performance is carried out so that any weaker practice can be tackled.
- Governors have managed the transition to academy status well, but rightly now realise they must focus on developing the school's longer term aims to become an even better and more effective school. They have identified, for example, the priority of looking at ways that they can improve the more cramped, older areas of the school to match the quality of newer parts of the school building. They are also supportive of and help to promote links within the community, such as with a local restaurant supplying school dinners each day.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They are polite, friendly and mature. Most are very happy with the way the school provides for them. A small number says that there are occasionally some disagreements and fallouts between pupils. Most say these are resolved quickly and amicably.
- Pupils like the small size of the school, which they say helps them to get to know each other well. Relationships are typically positive and harmonious. Pupils are keen to contribute to assemblies and are respectful of their surroundings.
- Pupils appreciate the range of responsibilities they have, such as acting as play leaders. These pupils say they like to help others play different games so that everyone has something to do at playtimes or lunchtimes. Others enjoy their role as school council members, and have already identified the need to train up fellow pupils to have a responsibility to help resolve any disputes in the playground.
- Pupils are particularly enthusiastic about their sporting prowess. They like the increased range of sports, which helps to increase their activity levels. They also like the early morning breakfast club, which includes regular physical activity before school starts.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils tell visitors that the school cares for them well, and this is reflected in the way staff support individuals who may need extra support in class. Most pupils feel that staff react quickly to any concerns.
- Staff take great care to ensure that pupils keep themselves safe when they make regular trips to the church. The pupils wear reflective clothing and there is a high level of staffing to ensure safe crossing of the road.
- Pupils say that bullying is relatively rare and most, but not all, parents agree. Pupils have a very clear understanding of what bullying is, aided by annual 'bullying week' initiatives. They also recognise that it can take many forms, such as name calling or unkind comments.
- The school ensures that pupils are fully aware of the risks associated with using computers and mobile phones. Pupils know how they would deal with any online bullying and are very clear about the dangers of sharing personal information on the internet.
- In the Reception class, children are kept extremely safe and excellent links with parents ensure that they settle in very well. The school caters extremely effectively for their welfare needs.

The quality of teaching is good

- Pupils say that teachers make lessons interesting. They especially like extra activities related to mathematics, literacy and, more recently, sports. Pupils follow teachers' instructions carefully. They enjoy opportunities to discuss topics and listen to the answers of their classmates.
- Pupils are generally confident and effective writers, which is reflected in their national tests results. Opportunities for pupils to write for different purposes, such as protesting against an imaginary 'outrageous party manifesto' relating to the recent election, boost their enthusiasm and creativity. Pupils generally use conventions such as full stops, capital letters and speech marks appropriately, but teachers do not always ensure that pupils spell or punctuate their work accurately in all year groups.
- In mathematics, teaching ensures that pupils gain a good level of calculation skills and knowledge of how to collect and sort information. Lesson activities help develop pupils' knowledge of, for example, how to interpret graphs or understand fractions. However, teachers do not always fully extend pupils' ability to develop their reasoning skills and to justify their answers.
- Teachers make very good use of sport funding to provide activities that would otherwise not be available

in a small school. This includes coaching in various sports, both during lessons and before school.

- Reading is particularly well taught. Pupils have a wide variety of opportunities to read different types of books. Pupils say they like reading a wide range of books at home as well as at school. Pupils benefit from daily reading activities which extend their enjoyment and skills.
- Teachers ensure that pupils are enthusiastic learners, as working relationships between pupils and staff are fostered effectively. This means that pupils usually tackle tasks with enthusiasm.
- In the Reception class, teachers make particularly effective provision for children's basic skills as well as their social and emotional development. Children thoroughly enjoy taking part in the outdoor activities.
- Pupils' written work shows that it is marked effectively and that pupils understand how well they are making progress. Over time, pupils' understanding improves as pupils have regular opportunities to respond to their teachers' marking. However, not all teachers, particularly in Years 3 to 6, make sure that pupils present their work to the highest standards.
- Those pupils who find learning more difficult, or who are disadvantaged, keep pace with others in the class. Staff ensure that these pupils benefit from a range of different opportunities which caters for their needs effectively. This includes working with one another, with staff and sometimes with professionals who visit the school.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils throughout the school make good progress from their different starting points. Results in national tests have been above average in recent years. A relative weakness in mathematics has been remedied during the past year. Past work and checks on current pupils' progress in reading, mathematics and writing indicate that most pupils are making good progress.
- Pupils, including the youngest in the school, speak clearly and confidently. Nearly all pupils willingly explain what they like best and what they would like to see improved. They usually listen very carefully to each other, as well as to staff and visitors.
- In mathematics, pupils develop accurate calculation skills, including in long division and multiplication. They understand basic mathematical ideas such as perimeter and distance. For example, older pupils enjoyed watching a high altitude jump to gain an idea of how speed could be measured during the descent.
- The most-able pupils achieve well and this is reflected in their test results. For example, around half of pupils in Year 6 reached the higher levels in national tests, with a small number reaching levels more usually found in secondary schools. The most-able pupils in Year 2 also achieve well and the standard of their work shows they are making good progress.
- A focus on developing pupils' writing has been particularly successful in enabling pupils to write in different ways and at greater length. This has produced some good results in national tests. However, in day-to-day writing, pupils' spelling and punctuation sometimes vary in accuracy. Their presentation in both English and in mathematics is not consistently of a high standard.
- The few disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs achieve well. Quick identification of their learning requirements, support from outside professionals and activities matched to their needs ensure that they make good progress.
- Pupils read enthusiastically and confidently. They know the names of different authors, have their favourites, and say they like using the well-resourced reading corners in each class. Year 1 pupils reached above-average levels in the national phonic screening check last year, reflecting their confidence and success in reading and writing unfamiliar words.
- Pupils achieve particularly well in a variety of sports, including cricket, tennis, and athletics. Some also enjoy learning to play the guitar and to speak French. Their knowledge and understanding of the countryside are very well developed.
- Reception class children achieve extremely well from their individual starting points, particularly in their basic skills, as well as their social and emotional development. They enjoy playing together and achieve extremely well in gaining early reading and writing skills.
- The few pupils who are eligible for additional pupil premium funding achieve well. The small number of disadvantaged pupils makes it inappropriate to report on their attainment and progress compared with other pupils nationally.

The early years provision**is outstanding**

- Children make an outstanding start to their formal education. They achieve extremely well as most make excellent progress from their starting points. This gives them an extremely secure start when they begin Year 1 work.
- Teaching is typically outstanding. It provides for a wide range of activities to take place, such as studying other countries, investigating mythical creatures or exploring the rainforest. Children are very keen to take part in the activities and to discuss with their classmates what they should do. Staff make extremely good use of the very well resourced outdoor area.
- Children's progress is assessed carefully and their progress is recorded in learning journals, which accurately record how well children have achieved during the year. The journals include a wide variety of children's work, as well as photographs and comments by teachers and parents.
- Children are extremely well looked after and their behaviour is excellent. They learn in a calm and orderly atmosphere, and their welfare needs are considered very carefully by staff. Before children start their next year, there are regular transition sessions to help them to make a smooth start to Key Stage 1. Parents also speak very highly of the work that takes place in this part of the school and say that their children 'love their class teacher'.
- A wide variety of activities, combined with excellent teaching, enables children to make excellent progress. Children talk enthusiastically about what they have to do in the class-based 'travel agents' where they learn about different countries. Children also learn extremely well by exploring the sand tray to work out, for example, how many legs each animal has or in using their modelling skills to make vehicles to travel through a rainforest. One child showed great attention to detail as he decided to make a parrot; he was keen to tell others that the 'feathers' were very delicate and that he had to be careful. Children's verbal skills are developed extremely well through regular discussions, and both their writing and reading skills become very secure.
- Through regular teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters or combinations of letters make), children are very skilful at working out unfamiliar words, while many read whole sentences with relative ease. Children are keen to point to the range of books that they read and which ones are their favourites.
- The leadership of early years is highly effective. The class teacher and the early years leader, who is based in the partner school, work together extremely well to ensure that children have the highest quality start to their school life. Staff have developed excellent links with parents, and liaise with them frequently and to very good effect.
- Children's safety is provided for extremely well. Parents who spoke to the inspector praised very highly the way their children feel settled and secure in this part of the school.

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	138001
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	449699

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy alternative provision converter
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	115
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Stephanie Atkins
Headteacher	Jude Askey-Brown
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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