

Sauncey Wood Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117102
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	358081
Inspection dates	1–2 December 2010
Reporting inspector	Alan Jarvis

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	116
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Helen Parkinson
Headteacher	John Burt
Date of previous school inspection	1 October 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Inspectors observed seven teachers in nine classroom visits. Meetings were held with members of the governing body, the headteacher and senior staff responsible for key areas of the school's work. Inspectors looked at planning, minutes of meetings and other documentation, including that relating to safeguarding and pupils' learning and progress. Questionnaires returned by members of staff, pupils and 54 parents and carers were analysed.

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

- How well do pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities progress in mainstream classes and in the speech and language base?
- How effective is teaching in the mixed aged classes and the speech and language base in Years 3 to 6?
- Have the strengths in pupils' personal development been sustained?
- How good is pupils' understanding of other cultures in the United Kingdom?

Information about the school

Nearly all pupils are of White British heritage in this smaller than average school in which numbers are rising. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above average. In mainstream classes most of these have specific learning difficulties, behavioural or autistic needs. The school has a unit called 'the base', managed by the school, for pupils in Years 3 to 6 who have severe speech and language difficulties. All of these have a statement of special educational need. Currently there are 10 pupils in this base, who also spend some of their time in mainstream classes. Pupils are taught in single-age classes in Reception and Years 1 and 2. In Years 3 and 4 and Year 5 and 6 they are taught in mixed-aged classes. The proportion of pupils who arrive or leave part way through their primary school education is above that found in most other schools. The school has a number of awards including Healthy Schools status and the Activemark award.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good and inclusive school which has improved since the last inspection. It has very positive relationships with parents and carers. Contact with them is individualised to maximise their involvement in school and enable them to support their children's learning at home. Several wrote to say, 'This is a gem of a school', 'It is like a second home', and 'It is well worth the five mile journey every day.'

Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage in all areas of learning. The large majority of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, continue to make good progress throughout the school. This stems from the good teaching, especially in the mixed aged classes, and a strong focus on literacy and numeracy, which enables pupils to apply their skills across a range of subjects. Pupils' learning is enhanced by their consistently good behaviour and keenness to learn in lessons. Pupils in the base benefit from a good curriculum which is closely matched to their needs and the carefully thought out targets in their individual education plans (IEPs). Interesting topic work and regular homework enable pupils to make good gains in developing their independence and creativity in learning. Work in their learning logs related to this is of a good standard.

The school is adept in giving support to pupils who are falling behind in their learning. This is quickly reducing the proportion of pupils who make slower progress than their peers, but there remain a small number, for three reasons. First, while there are many good features of teaching in the base, a few pupils do not make the good progress that others do because of inconsistencies in the way questioning is used to help them structure their speaking and writing. Second, a few pupils in mainstream classes have been identified as having gaps in their abilities to calculate in mathematics. Third, several pupils are persistently absent from school, which is a major barrier to their making better progress. This lowers the overall attendance levels, which are now average and rising significantly.

Strengths in pupils' personal development have been sustained. These result from the good care, lively assemblies which promote the school's values and a strong focus on personal and social education within the curriculum. Pupils say they feel very safe. They have a good understanding of the need for vigorous exercise and the importance of a balanced diet, which is a reflection of the awards the school has gained in these areas. While pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good, their awareness of the different faiths and ways of life in our country is patchy. The school is actively seeking to develop wider links with contrasting communities but the plan to promote community cohesion is not sufficiently ambitious.

Ambitions for further school improvement are shared among a cohesive staff team and an effective governing body. Teamwork is very well developed. Since the previous inspection, strengths have been sustained, pupils' achievement and the quality of all aspects of

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provision have improved and all areas for improvement have been robustly tackled. The school knows itself very well. Through its accurate self-evaluation, the school development plan is focused on tackling the few remaining areas of weakness. These factors demonstrate a good capacity to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By September 2011, raise the attainment of the few pupils who make slower progress so that they meet their challenging academic or personal targets by:
 - sharpening questioning in the base so that teachers consistently help pupils understand how to structure their speaking and writing
 - addressing pupils' gaps in the skills of calculation
 - improving the attendance of the pupils who are persistently absent.
- Over a two year period, strengthen and fully implement the plan for community cohesion, to provide pupils with more opportunities to understand the ways of life and beliefs in society.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Standards vary because year groups are small and the proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disability vary in each year group. Against this backdrop, the school's data, work seen in books and lessons reflect a rising trend of attainment. Although attainment is average, it is occasionally influenced by pupils who join the school part way through their education. Staff and governors rightly focus on the progress that pupils make from their very different starting points. This shows that, although small pockets of slower progress remain, the proportion of pupils making good progress has been increasing year by year and now includes most pupils. The challenging targets set for pupils have consistently been met and sometimes exceeded.

There are no significant differences in the good progress made by all groups of pupils. Nearly all pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities in mainstream classes make good progress because work is well matched to their needs and they are well supported. So too are pupils in the base and most make good progress. However, the learning of a few sometimes slows because their language development is not always well structured in all lessons. Those who join the school partway through their education make good progress in response to the individually tailored support provided to meet their often complex learning needs.

Pupils' enjoyment of learning, as seen particularly in their eagerness and involvement in English and mathematics, is characteristic of lessons and reflects the good pace of learning across the school. Pupils willingly contribute in lessons and work well in small groups. For example, in a Year 2 lesson pupils worked diligently when recognising fractions and dividing shapes up into halves and quarters. Pupils in the Year 3 and 4 class were very focused and worked co-operatively in pairs when using 'wow' words to write about a street scene in Egypt, explaining how they knew that it was from another country. Pupils love to read and do so fluently, making notes in their reading records to help them understand the text and track their progress.

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Pupils say they like learning in many different ways and making friends, and feel very secure in the supportive environment. They are adamant that there is no bullying and show a good understanding of personal safety in and out of school. They are polite and courteous, and willingly take on responsibilities to help the school run smoothly. The very active school council provides good opportunities for pupils to represent the views of others and help improve the school such as by designing the 'tyre park' in the playground and raising money for charities. Pupils apply for jobs such as being Early Years assistants and attendance officers. This helps them develop useful workplace skills such as taking responsibility and doing jobs on time. Their average attainment in English and mathematics and sound application of these skills are helping to prepare them satisfactorily for secondary school. Pupils are very respectful and value each other's views but have a limited knowledge of communities in other parts of this country and around the world.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

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

How effective is the provision?

In most lessons, pupils are fully engaged on the activities set and sustain a good pace to learning. This is because teachers make consistently good use of 'We Are Learning To' and other steps to success to ensure that pupils are clear about intended learning outcomes. Occasionally teaching is outstanding because expectations are extremely high, questioning is used very skilfully and striking interventions are made to the pace of pupils' learning.

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The effective deployment of support staff and the close focus on pupils' targets in their IEPs are strong features of teaching in the base but inconsistencies in the effectiveness of questioning are reflected in the slower progress a few pupils make. Pupils are very clear about their targets and next steps for learning because the simple, but very effective, system of highlighting work in 'tickled pink' and 'green for growth' is used well.

The National Curriculum is adapted with imagination so that it is well matched to the needs and interests of pupils. Good steps are being taken to tailor the mathematics curriculum so that it builds on pupils' past skills more effectively. Pupils benefit from a range of interesting topic work such as 'Take one Picture' which has an art focus and 'World Kitchen' whose theme is food and family life around the world. These effectively link subjects together and help develop pupils' individual interests, skills and creativity. The school has a raft of special programmes, well matched to pupils' needs, to help those who find learning difficult, especially in the base. Clubs such as hockey, netball, a 'Fleet Street' newspaper club and knitting are very popular and have a high uptake; parents and carers sometimes attend to work alongside their children.

The school is very caring and supportive of pupils, especially those who face difficult circumstances. The inclusion leader plays a significant role in reaching out to parents and carers to ensure any barriers to their children's education are overcome. An example of this is the school's success in reducing the extent of persistent absence, although a little, stubbornly remains. Good induction procedures operate at every stage. For example, the pupils who join part way through the school year settle in quickly through the system 'a family of friends'. These contain small numbers of pupils of different ages across the school who constantly support each other. Bespoke support is given to those with special educational needs and/or disabilities on transfer to secondary school to ensure they choose and settle into their new schools well.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The strong collective leadership, underpinned by the resourceful and far-sighted headteacher, has established an increasingly popular school that is focused on further improving pupils' attainment and progress. Leaders and managers of the base ensure pupils are cared for very well, have established a good curriculum and are sharply focused on ironing out remaining inconsistencies in teaching. Lessons are regularly monitored. This has resulted in staff using consistent approaches to learning in lessons, which in turn have impacted well on pupils' progress. The school effectively promotes equality and tackles any form of discrimination. As a result, all groups of pupils make equally good progress.

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The active governing body analyse school performance well and coupled with regular visits have established a clear view of where they can best support and challenge the school. Their strategic involvement ensures that policies are systematically reviewed, resources closely targeted at educational need and the school development plan is sharply focused. Attention to pupils' safety is integral to the school's work. Safeguarding procedures are firmly embedded. Staff awareness of child protection issues is particularly strong and rigorous steps are taken to eliminate risks in school and on visits. A wide range of partnerships with other schools, specialist support agencies and local cultural organisations impact well on pupils' personal development through enhancing the quality of care and the curriculum.

Community cohesion is strongly promoted within the school and in the local area. However, the school's own documentation shows that the plan for further development is not ambitious enough and not enough is done to help pupils understand about people's backgrounds and communities in other parts of the United Kingdom and beyond.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Attainment in the Early Learning Goals is average by the end of Reception and children make good progress from typically below average starting points. This is due to the consistently good teaching, stimulating learning environment and a strong focus on every activity being seen as a learning opportunity. Children play happily together and feel very safe and well cared for due to the very good relationships which exist between themselves and adults. Learning is brought alive by stimuli such as the class skeleton who reveals to the children both the theme for the week and activities they can pursue. Within the weekly theme of 'What is smell?' children became actively engaged in using their imagination in the role play area, making a perfume factory using large plastic bricks and

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kneading bread. There are strong links with parents to help them support their children's learning. Initiatives such as parents sending in star shaped notes to celebrate successes at home and the sharing of rhyme time books which help develop the link between sounds and letters are very effective. The leader is constantly looking for improvement and there are firm plans to develop further the outdoor area and provide more multicultural resources to help children understand the richness in cultural diversity.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The vast majority of parents and carers are extremely positive about all aspects of the school. The rate of response was much higher than typically found. They are especially pleased with how well the school is led and managed, the quality of the teaching, and how much their children enjoy school and feel safe. Parental views are typified by comments such as 'My daughter is doing very well in this great little school', and 'The school has a wonderful, caring family feel and because of this the pupils really respect each other.'

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Sauncey Wood Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 54 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 116 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	43	80	11	20	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	43	80	9	17	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	40	74	14	26	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	41	76	11	20	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	44	81	9	17	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	40	74	12	22	1	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	38	70	16	30	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	35	65	17	31	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	40	74	12	22	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	38	70	15	28	1	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	38	70	15	28	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	42	78	11	20	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	47	87	6	11	1	2	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 all 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



3 December 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Sauncey Wood Primary School, Harpenden, AL5 5HL

Thank you for making the inspectors so welcome to your school. I enjoyed talking with you, looking at your work and listening to Year 6 readers. We found out that you go to a good school. Here is a list of some of the things we liked best.

Your parents and carers think highly of the school and we can see why.

Children in the Reception class make a good start to their education.

You make good progress especially in English and mathematics and in using these skills in other subjects.

Your behaviour is consistently good, you help the school in many ways and have a good understanding of how to keep fit and healthy.

Topic work and the learning you do at home is often of a good standard.

Adults in the school care for you well and that means that you feel safe in school and always have someone to turn to if you need help.

Most pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities in mainstream classes and in the base make good progress in their learning and personal skills.

The headteacher, senior staff and the governing body have improved the school since the last inspection and have good plans for further development.

Every school has some things that could be improved. These are the areas we want your school to concentrate on now:

- to ensure teachers in the base consistently question you so that you are clear about how to structure your speaking and writing
- to provide support to the few pupils have gaps in their knowledge of how to do some calculations in mathematics
- to improve the attendance of a few pupils who do not attend regularly - you can help by aiming for a perfect attendance record
- to enable you to learn more about other communities in our country - you can help by reading more about them and visiting other towns.

I wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Alan Jarvis

Lead inspector

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