

Sawtry Junior School

Middlefield Road, Sawtry, Huntingdon, PE28 5SH

Inspection dates 20–21 September 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Pupils do not make the best possible progress as work is not well enough pitched to all ability levels.
- Activities are not always sufficiently interesting to motivate learning and keep pupils on task.
- Teachers do not make effective enough use of teaching assistants, especially at the start of lessons.
- Teachers' marking does not always make it clear how pupils can improve.
- New systems to manage behaviour have not had sufficient time to take effect across the school.
- Some leaders, including governors, do not monitor the school's work systematically enough.
- Ways to keep parents informed and gather their views are limited.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher are a strong team. They monitor accurately and drive improvements in teaching through effective staff development.
- Standards in reading, writing and mathematics are above average and have improved recently.
- The headteacher goes the extra mile in supporting pupils, noticeably improving behaviour and attitudes to learning.
- Attendance is above average. Pupils are safe and the new peer mediator system helps them to resolve any differences.
- Good systems track pupils' progress and flag up any underachievement.
- Pupils make good use of computers in their learning.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 14 lessons, of which one was a joint observation with the headteacher.
- Eight teachers were seen teaching and inspectors observed one assembly.
- Meetings were held with two groups of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body, a representative from the local authority and staff, including managers.
- Inspectors talked to pupils in lessons about their work, looked at books and listened to pupils read.
- Inspectors took account of the 39 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection and spoke to parents at the start of the school day.
- They analysed responses from 18 questionnaires from school staff.
- Inspectors observed the school’s work, looked at progress data, monitoring documentation, records relating to behaviour and attendance and documents relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Vivienne McTiffen, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Lynn Lowery

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized junior school.
- The proportion of pupils supported by school action is average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average. Their needs relate mainly to moderate learning difficulties, behavioural, emotional and social difficulties and autistic spectrum disorder.
- The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and for whom the school receives additional income (the pupil premium) is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school has encountered recent staffing difficulties due to long-term illness.
- The school has received the Basic Skills Quality Mark.
- There is an after-school club that is not managed by the governing body and is inspected separately.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement and improve the quality of teaching to be good or better by:
 - ensuring a good match of work to pupils' needs so that all pupils make the best possible progress
 - providing activities that enthuse, motivate and challenge, which promote good behaviour and give pupils more opportunity to be responsible for their learning and show initiative
 - maximising the involvement of teaching assistants during all stages of lessons, especially introductions
 - embedding the best practice in marking across the school so pupils are clear how to improve.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - building upon the secure start made in a whole-school approach to behaviour management that is effective for all pupils and promotes high expectations amongst all staff
 - evolving the monitoring role of middle and subject leaders, and the governing body, to more systematically check the quality of provision and the school's work
 - establishing a greater range of ways to keep parents informed and gather their views.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- While some pupils make good progress, for the majority, achievement requires improvement. The main reason for this is that teachers do not pay enough attention to matching work to pupils' abilities. This means higher attaining pupils are not challenged enough and lower attainers find the work too hard.
- There are signs of improvement. Teachers are more involved in understanding progress data so they are clear about what pupils should achieve. The school has successfully addressed the dip in standards in 2010 but recent uncertainty over staffing arrangements has slowed down the process of developing a consistent approach to raising achievement across the school.
- From broadly above average starting points, standards are maintained to be above average in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6, reflected in the school's award for basic skills. Pupils read regularly. They enjoy a range of texts, talk about plots and give opinions about story lines. They write expressively for a range of purposes and across subjects, and they develop competent mathematical skills.
- Pupils achieve most when they are inspired to learn. For example, during the inspection, pupils in a Year 5 and 6 class enjoyed taking part in a Battle of Hastings 're-enactment'. This experience helped them to see events from the participants' perspective and inspired them to write first-person accounts. They made good progress because they found the task interesting. However, pupils are not always sufficiently engaged and their attention wanes.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make progress in line with other pupils. They benefit from regular and well-targeted support so they make small steps in their learning and develop confidence in their ability. Those who find good behaviour difficult receive support tailored to their individual needs and show improvement over time as they conform to the school's expectations.
- Pupils known to be eligible for free school meals make progress in line with their peers. They often receive additional support, working in groups or as individuals, with extra adult help and resources funded through the pupil premium.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because, while it is good in some lessons, there is not the level of consistency needed to speed up pupils' progress, which varies from class to class. Current re-structuring of mixed-age classes is leading to greater teamwork between staff to ensure continuity of approach between classes.
- The best learning happens when teachers accurately match work to pupils' abilities. In a mathematics lesson, the teacher set the right level of challenge so more-able pupils solved problems independently and less-able pupils worked with adults. The teacher gave good written feedback so pupils were clear about how well they were doing and how to improve. However, this good practice is not consistent in all classes.
- Teaching assistants play an essential role, often supporting the learning of lower attainers and pupils with special educational needs. They build strong relationships with pupils and help them to succeed. Although they are present throughout the lesson, they are not

always sufficiently involved during introductions when there is not enough opportunity for them to work with pupils of differing needs.

- New teaching arrangements in mathematics utilise staff expertise well and allow pupils of similar abilities to work together. This is designed to raise achievement across the school but it is too early to see the impact of this initiative. Leaders help teachers devise ways to improve the frequency and quality of writing in their classes and ensure regular reading sessions, with positive effect on raising achievement in these subjects.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and make good use of information and communication technology to promote learning and the development of skills. During the inspection, a class used computers effectively to research, gather and collate information for their topic work. Staff encouraged independent research and decision making which pupils enjoyed, although they do not always have this chance to be responsible for their learning and show initiative.

The behaviour and safety of pupils requires improvement

- Behaviour requires improvement because the best possible behaviour is not sufficiently encouraged in all lessons. The vast majority of pupils pay attention and concentrate well but attention wanes when they are not sufficiently engaged. In some instances, teachers' expectations are not high enough and they fail to ensure pupils are fully motivated and inspired to learn.
- Most pupils behave well, especially during assemblies, lunchtime and at playtimes. They show tolerance towards those who find good behaviour difficult. Pupils know the differences between right and wrong and strive to 'Stay on Green' under the school's new behaviour management system. This is consistently applied by all staff and is popular with pupils and parents but has not been operating long enough to judge its effectiveness.
- The school's logs very clearly show that poor behaviour of a very small minority of pupils has improved over time. These pupils are well managed by staff, especially teaching assistants, who show good understanding of individual needs and how best to support them. The school is thorough in recording incidents and following them up. It maintains good links with external agencies and parents.
- Pupils recognise unsafe situations and know how to stay safe. They value what the school teaches them. They know about different forms of bullying and sensibly discuss what bullying means. Incidents are rare but, when they do occur, they are discussed in assemblies or personal, social and health education (PSHE) lessons. Responses from parents indicate that most agree their child feels safe at school.
- Pupils willingly accept roles of responsibility and enjoy helping each other. They like being reading buddies, peer mediators or school councillors and take their roles seriously. These roles have a positive effect on personal development and create a cohesive school community. One pupil commented, 'Conflicts have gone a lot because we have peer mediators.' Pupils say they would like more chance to take on responsibility and show initiative in all aspects of school life.
- Pupils say they are happy to come to school and parents agree. This is reflected in above average attendance.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The headteacher is the driving force behind much of the school's work, with a clear focus on developing teamwork and involving all in the school's vision. He recognises individual qualities and promotes the sharing of good practice. He spearheads strong pastoral care and forges good links with external agencies. The headteacher and deputy headteacher maintain effective systems for monitoring teaching and learning but the involvement of middle and subject leaders in systematic monitoring is under-developed.
 - The local authority's effective support for the school's strategic planning has led to robust self-evaluation and well-focused plans for improvement. Better monitoring identifies and eradicates weaknesses in teaching. A programme of professional development is well matched to the needs of the staff and the school.
 - The school is committed to ensuring equality of opportunity for all its pupils, illustrated by well-established systems to check pupils' progress. Staff and senior leaders meet regularly to discuss the progress of each pupil and flag up any underachievement. Additional funding, including the pupil premium, is spent appropriately on additional resources, with positive effect on pupils' achievement.
 - The curriculum provides a broad range of activities and promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. Educational visits and clubs develop talents and make a positive contribution to pupils' personal development. Leaders promote the development of skills across the curriculum through topics that bring different subjects together.
 - There are effective daily links with parents. The school works well with parents of pupils with special educational needs. Homework in the form of 'Learning Logs' and pupil organisers keeps parents in touch with their children's learning but the school does not have enough ways to keep all parents fully informed or to gather their views.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - has a clear understanding of what the school is doing well and where it could improve
 - receives regular reports from the headteacher which evaluate the school's performance
 - is not systematically involved in directly monitoring provision because many governors are new to their role
 - is conversant with its responsibilities and carries out a range of checks, including regular review of policies, to ensure the school's systems are robust and safeguarding arrangements meet requirements.
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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	110688
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	401144

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	228
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Nancy Leversha
Headteacher	Steve West
Date of previous school inspection	12 May 2010
Telephone number	01487 830204
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Email address	head@sawtry-jun.cambs.sch.uk

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