

Saxon Wood School

Barron Place, Rooksdown, Basingstoke, RG24 9HN

Inspection dates 14–15 November 2012

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- In relation to their starting points, pupils make good progress by the time they leave school at the end of Year 6.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress, which prepares them well for transition into Year 1.
- As a result of a sustained focus on improvement by the senior leaders, pupils' achievement and the proportion of good or better teaching has improved since the previous inspection. Teachers plan work effectively, focusing especially on pupils improving their communication skills.
- Pupils thoroughly enjoy their learning. Their behaviour is typically excellent as a result of highly effective support from teachers and other adults, including specialist therapists.
- Pupils told the inspector they feel happy and safe at the school, which is confirmed by the school's own records of feedback from pupils.
- The headteacher and his deputy provide effective leadership, including good arrangements for regular reviews of staff performance. The areas identified for improvement at the previous inspection have been dealt with successfully.
- The experienced governing body is effective in its role as a critical and supportive friend of the school, ensuring the school is financially stable.
- The school has excellent relationships with other specialist professionals and the local business community, which has enabled it to improve the quality of resources to support pupils' all-round development.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils' small steps in learning are not always consistently checked during lessons.
- Other adults who support teachers in lessons are not providing enough opportunities for pupils to be independent learners.
- Current staff whole-school responsibilities below senior leadership level do not always provide a sharp enough focus on raising standards in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the main school.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed six lessons, seeing six teachers. Two of the lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- A meeting was held with a small group of pupils. Meetings were also held with the senior leadership team, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector took account of seven responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and the results of the school's own regular parental surveys, as well as an individual letter from a parent or carer addressed to the lead inspector.
- The inspector observed the school's practice and looked at a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning, data on pupils' progress, documents used by leaders to monitor and evaluate the school's work, governing body documentation and records relating to attendance, behaviour and safeguarding.

Inspection team

James Bowden, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Saxon Wood provides for pupils with physical difficulties and varying medical needs. The majority have cerebral palsy and a large majority are wheelchair users. A few have deteriorating medical conditions. In addition, the majority have severe learning difficulties and a minority have moderate learning difficulties. All have a statement of special educational needs.
- Pupils come from a wide geographical area covering the whole of North Hampshire and some adjacent local authorities.
- Currently, the majority of pupils are boys and almost all are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium, which provides additional funding to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, looked after children or those whose parents or carers are servicing in the forces, is below the national average.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher were appointed in September 2010.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching by:
 - ensuring all staff consistently check pupils' small steps in learning during lessons
 - developing further the roles of learning support assistants to ensure pupils have more opportunities for independent learning.
- Streamline existing staff whole-school responsibilities below senior leadership level in order to provide a sharper focus on raising standards in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the main school.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- As a result of pupils' wide range of physical capabilities, medical conditions and diverse special educational needs, attainment on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage and Year 1 is well below that found in mainstream schools. By the end of Year 6, attainment remains below the average for mainstream schools. However, in relation to their starting points, pupils make good progress and achieve well. All are prepared well for the next stage of their education. During the last academic year, one pupil was supported sufficiently well to be transferred to a mainstream school and potential transfers are planned for this academic year.
- Initial assessments are effective in recognising pupils' capabilities, enabling teachers to plan appropriately challenging work for all pupils. Each has an individual education plan with clear academic and personal targets, including physical development and communication capabilities. Progress towards these targets is carefully checked over time by teachers, which results in extra support if needed, or changing the targets to underpin further improvement.
- Pupils make significant strides in developing their physical independence. Using both manual and battery-powered wheelchairs, pupils confidently navigate their way around the classrooms, corridors and outdoor play areas.
- Over the last three years pupils have achieved well in English, mathematics and science. There are no significant differences in the rates of progress made by boys or girls or those supported by pupil premium funding. In reading, supported by the use of sounding out letters, the more able make steady progress in improving their reading ages.
- In most lessons seen, pupils make good progress. In a mixed-age older class, for example, pupils learned about different shapes and the more capable understood the basic vocabulary of different triangles. The school's accurate and detailed records confirm good progress is typical over time in different subjects.
- Pupils' progress in improving communication capabilities is also good and supported by a range of new technologies such as switches, computers, touch screens and synthetic voice talking machines. Visual communication cards and signing also support pupils' communication capabilities, for example, enabling them to make choices and making learning enjoyable.

The quality of teaching is good

- The significant strength of teaching is how effectively teachers plan work that is closely matched to pupils' previous achievements, in particular, focusing on pupils improving their communication skills and physical development. Teachers and other adults supporting lessons work closely with physiotherapists and occupational therapists to deliver, when appropriate, extra support and guidance to pupils throughout all lessons.
- Effective planning ensures there is a range of activities suited to each individual's needs. In a mixed-age class of younger pupils, all were involved in comparing the concepts of 'big', 'middle' and 'little' by colouring in elephant shapes to make a hanging decoration celebrating the Diwali festival of light. In a mixed-age physical education lesson, including wheelchair users, a high level of physical challenge included a warm-up session involving appropriate stretches at the start, 'Gangnam-style' dancing movements and floor-work for all, prior to practising playing Victorian games.
- Teachers and adults supporting lessons work well together, enabling pupils to make the best progress possible in relation to their individual targets. This includes one-to-one support for specific tasks as well as working together with the teacher with small groups, which ensures good progress is the norm in all lessons and activities provided.
- At the start of lessons, teachers explain to pupils what they will be doing, ensure they understand what is expected of them and, at the end, involving pupils as much as is possible, sum up what has been achieved.

- The quality of teaching has been improved since the previous inspection, particularly the proportion judged as good or better. However, the senior leaders are aware that there are inconsistencies in the effectiveness of checking and recording pupils' small steps in learning during lessons. In addition, not all adults supporting in the lessons allow pupils enough time to respond to questions or the tasks set.
- Pupils told the inspector that lessons were very interesting and that teachers helped them with lots of useful resources, including new technologies.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- On arriving in the morning, a pupil greeted the inspector at the main entrance saying, 'Hello'. The inspector responded, 'Hello, how are you?', whereupon the pupil's immediate response was, 'Happy!' This, along with lots of smiling faces, both in the morning and when they leave at the end of the day, is indicative of pupils' highly positive attitudes and enjoyment of learning.
- In addition, unauthorised absence is very low, there have been no recent permanent or fixed-term exclusions and the number of recorded serious behaviour incidents has declined.
- Well-established routines and consistently high expectations result in excellent behaviour in lessons and around the school. This was abundantly clear in the whole school practice for the Christmas concert and during formal lunch-time in the hall.
- In lessons seen, there are typically no incidents of untoward behaviour, thus learning is not disrupted. Pupils work well as individuals and the more capable work as small groups, all collaborating well with the adults. At the start of the Early Years Foundation Stage day, all patiently await their turn to formally greet each other and recognise the sound of the first letter of each of their names. In a mathematics lesson, a small group worked well together with the teacher and supporting adults when practising counting from one to 10.
- The school takes all necessary steps to ensure pupils are safe. Behaviour management plans and individual risk assessments are used highly effectively. Each pupil's behaviour is carefully tracked and individual cases are reviewed regularly.
- Without exception, those parents and carers who responded to Parent View felt their child was happy, safe and well looked after at school. These views are reflected in the school's own parent and carer surveys. Pupils too feel they are safe, telling the inspector they all get on well together and that all adults are helpful and friendly.

The leadership and management are good

- The senior leaders' drive and ambition have ensured sustained improvement. All staff have high regard for pupils' dignity, striving to achieve the best outcomes possible, both academically and personally.
- An effective programme of assessing the quality of teaching has ensured senior leaders and governors have a secure grasp of the school's existing strengths and areas for improvement. In-depth annual reviews of teachers' performance are linked to the progress made by their pupils. Evaluation of this is then used effectively to determine teachers' progression across the salary scales. This has resulted in an increase in the proportion of good or better teaching.
- Staff and governors are involved in evaluating the school's effectiveness and there are regular surveys of parents' and carers' views. Accurate self-evaluation supports action planning for further improvements, including changes in current roles of responsibility of those below senior leadership level. The issues identified at the previous inspection have been successfully dealt with.
- Good relations are fostered as a result of the school's ethos of equality and non-tolerance of discrimination.
- The curriculum is the same as that found in mainstream provisions. In addition, it focuses on pupils' communication and physical development, thus ensuring the needs of all pupils are met

fully. Links with the local schools sports partnership support the school's sports clubs, and visits to the local community develop pupils' independence and improve their communication skills. Strong provision of topic-based themes across the subjects ensures pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

- The local authority knows the school well, having worked closely with the headteacher since his appointment. It provides light touch but effective support, enabling the school to sustain its focus on continuing improvement.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Because key governors have a background in public finance and others have had or still have children at the school, the governing body is an effective, supportive yet critical friend of the school. It holds the school to account for its performance and pupils' achievements. It is involved effectively in school improvement planning and in checking the performance of the headteacher. It also checks how well the senior leaders evaluate staff performance and relate this to pay and promotion. In addition, it ensures statutory requirements are met and that safeguarding procedures are fully in place and effective. The finance committee oversees the allocation and use of pupil premium funding, which is being spent effectively to support individual pupils' progress and to provide more resources for the curriculum.

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	116634
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	401609

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	2–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	31
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Chris Howard
Headteacher	Richard Parratt
Date of previous school inspection	10–11 February 2010
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