

Saxmundham Primary School

Brook Farm Road, Saxmundham, IP17 1XQ

Inspection dates 4–5 December 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		Good	2
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

- The quality of teaching is not consistently good because teachers' and pupils' aspirations are not high enough. Adults too often do things for the pupils that they could beneficially do for themselves.
- Staff do not use information to check pupils' attainment on entry or progress well enough to ensure that children in the Early Years Foundation Stage do as well as they could and show initiative in their learning.
- Attainment in mathematics has remained static over time, despite some good practice. This is because not all pupils have rapid recall of number facts or use their mathematical knowledge enough in other areas of work.
- Although leaders, managers and members of the governing body have accurately identified the action needed to improve teaching and so accelerate pupils' progress, they are not yet stringent enough in evaluating the impact of their plan. The school is improving, but not quickly enough.

The school has the following strengths

- Many pupils read well. The library is a highly-valued resource and pupils frequently borrow a wide range of high-quality children's fiction and non-fiction books.
- The school ensures all pupils are fully included in all aspects of school life. It has responded extremely well to the challenge to making suitable provision for a high number of pupils with complex physical and learning needs. Intense staff training and a close partnership with a special school mean these pupils are well supported.
- The provision for pupils' cultural development, especially in the arts and music, enables them to produce work of good quality. They know about and have a good understanding of life in cultures different from their own.
- Parents appreciate fully the care and support their children receive, especially in times of difficulty.
- Pupils behave well and know how to stay safe. The school is very successful in enabling pupils who have severe behavioural difficulties to play a full role in the life of the school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 20 parts of lessons and small group activities. The provision for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs was closely observed. Some observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors joined pupils for lunch and observed their behaviour in the playground.
- Pupils shared their views about the school and read to inspectors, who reviewed their previous work.
- Inspectors met with representatives of the local authority and governing body, and with the headteacher who is also the special educational needs co-coordinator, deputy headteacher, and staff with additional responsibilities for the Early Years Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.
- The responses from 40 parents who completed the questionnaire on the Parent View website were considered. Inspectors also took into account views expressed in letters sent to the inspection team and in discussions when parents brought their children to school.
- The school's development plan, raising achievement plan, self-evaluation, records for the management of teachers' performance and checks on the quality of teaching, arrangements to keep pupils safe and attendance records were scrutinised.

Inspection team

Katherine Beck, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Sa'ad Khaldi

Additional Inspector

Teresa Kiely

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is similar in size to most other primary schools.
- Since the previous inspection in 2009, the school has grown rapidly, taking pupils from outside the immediate area across the age range whilst also establishing new classes for Years 5 and 6.
- Pupils in Year 6 will take the national tests for the first time in 2013. It no longer has a nursery as all children in the Early Year Foundation Stage start school in the September of the academic year in which they become five.
- There has been an increase in the number of staff and many pupils are new to the school.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs who are supported through school action plus or have a statement of special educational needs is about double that in most schools. The proportion supported at school action is similarly high.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported by additional funding known as pupil premium is similar to that found in schools nationally.
- Almost all pupils are educated on site. Education for a very small minority is shared with a special school in Ipswich.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good by:
 - giving pupils ambitious and realistic goals that help them to understand what they need to do to make better progress
 - providing pupils with resources in lessons that help them to be independent and reduce their reliance on adults
 - ensuring all teaching assistants are fully aware of the best ways to support learning.
- Improve the achievement of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - assessing children’s knowledge, skills and understanding accurately when they start school and using the information gained to measure their progress
 - consistently providing engaging activities that capture children’s curiosity, and help them to use their initiative and make decisions about their work, indoors and outdoors.
- Raise pupils’ achievements in mathematics by:
 - helping them to recall multiplication tables and number bonds rapidly
 - offering more practical activities that enable them to investigate mathematical ideas and apply their knowledge across the curriculum
 - making the most of the good practice observed in some mathematics lessons, to help others teach the subject well.
- Ensure that leaders, managers and members of the governing body check frequently that the initiatives to accelerate the rate of pupils’ progress, set out in the school development plan, especially in mathematics and the Early Years Foundation Stage, are having the desired effect.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- The school is adjusting to a rapidly-increasing roll, to an extended age range and to a high intake of pupils with very complex learning needs. This is adversely affecting learning in Key Stage 2 and attainment is currently low in Year 6, although the small group of more-able pupils is challenged appropriately.
- In mathematics throughout the school, pupils' attainment and progress require improvement because they do not have the rapid recall of number facts needed to apply their mathematical skills to new problems or other subject areas.
- Progress of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is not good enough. Inspectors judged children's attainment when they first start school to be below that usually expected for their age. Teachers' assessments of what children can do when they first start school are not sufficiently precise to provide a clear picture of what children can do and enable staff to check each child's progress over time. Too often, children's opportunities to think through their ideas are curtailed when adults intervene and tell them what to do. Consequently, children's personal, social and emotional development and their skills in communication, language and literacy are not as high as they should be when they enter Year 1.
- Pupils' progress accelerates in Key Stage 1. Overall attainment is broadly similar to that found in other schools in Year 2. Attainment in reading is above average and has been for the last three years. This is because pupils are taught to read through a good range of methods and the younger pupils read to an adult on a daily basis. In Key Stage 2, pupils continue to read well and enjoy a good range of literature.
- The quality of pupils' reading influences their writing. They write confidently in a range of different styles and purposes and apply their good knowledge of the sounds letters make to spelling.
- The pupil premium has been used effectively to boost the progress of pupils who have been identified as in need of additional support across the school. The decision to employ an extra qualified teacher has helped to sustain good levels of attainment in reading in the younger age groups, and the effective development of skills in writing.
- The school's records show that one third of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are making good progress, but for some pupils academic learning comes slowly.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Lesson observations by senior leaders have rightly identified that a key weakness in the quality of teaching is that pupils throughout the school are not helped sufficiently to become independent and make decisions about their work. Adults are keen to make sure pupils complete the tasks they are set correctly. In telling them exactly what to do, they remove the challenge for pupils to think through problems and ideas for themselves. In some lessons, teachers do not provide pupils with sufficient resources to help them work on their own.
- Teachers do not always make clear the time that pupils have to achieve their targets and how they might aspire to reach a higher level of attainment. This means work in some classes is pitched to the ages of the pupils rather than to their differing abilities. However, teachers do

mark pupils' work thoroughly and give them a clear idea of what they need to do to improve. This has a positive impact on their learning. Information from this is used to set target for pupils to achieve.

- On occasion, teaching assistants do too much for the pupils who become too reliant on them. Mostly they work in close cooperation with class teachers. The majority are well-trained and are clear about the activities they are to lead and how they are to help pupils to learn.
- The quality of mathematics teaching in the school is inconsistent because not all staff give sufficient attention to the areas that require the practical application of mathematics skills to various situations. To overcome this, a new programme of work has been purchased very recently, but it is too soon to see its impact on pupils' achievements.
- In the good lessons, teachers have good knowledge of their subject and share this well. Tasks motivate pupils to want to learn and, in some cases, are designed especially to appeal to boys. For example, pupils were given an imaginary figure, 'Crazy Eddy.' They were told he had shrunk and given his new shoe size they had to work out the proportionate dimensions of his arms and legs.
- Teachers' questions challenge pupils' thinking and call on them to justify their answers, but in some lessons the handing down of information gives little opportunity for pupils to explore ideas.
- The majority of parents responding to Parent View consider that their children receive a suitable amount of homework. Pupils are asked to read frequently, learn spellings and number facts, as well as carry out small research projects. The English homework has more impact on pupils' achievement than mathematics.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Parents responding to Parent View, pupils and staff are right in their view that behaviour is good in lessons, small group work and around the school.
 - Pupils are well-mannered, courteous to adults and are kind to one another. They are particularly considerate to those with a disability or complex needs. Lunchtimes are happy social occasions.
 - In lessons, pupils listen carefully to their teachers and are keen to succeed. They take pride in presenting their work neatly and doing their best, but sometimes they lose concentration when they lack the equipment to help them work unaided.
 - Pupils, who in the past who have shown challenging behaviour and have recently joined the school, learn very successfully how to manage their own behaviour. There have been no exclusions for several years.
 - Good relationships have resulted in pupils feeling safe in school. They are knowledgeable about different types of bullying and know that any unkindness is tackled sensitively.
 - The 'Eco Council' and gardening club, in particular, make important contributions to the life of the school. They raise the awareness of other pupils of the importance of planting new trees and taking care of the environment.
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- Leaders work closely with a wide range of professionals and other schools, and in partnership with parents, to ensure that those who are most vulnerable are kept safe.
- Attendance is average. The school is taking robust action to reduce the number of unauthorised absence and holidays taken in school time.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leaders and managers have not yet been able to raise the consistency of teaching and learning sufficiently to make achievement good. Now that the school is approaching its full size, they have carried out a thorough audit and have established a clear well-focused plan for its development in the longer term. These priorities are in line with those found during the inspection. They have begun to take action on these issues but the arrangements for monitoring their impact lack precision.
- Some teachers have undergone training in mathematics and have high level skills in the subject. These skills have not been effectively shared with all staff to increase their knowledge and teach the subject well.
- The use of mathematics knowledge, skills and understanding does not receive the same profile as English. Pupils enjoy learning a broad range of subjects and taking part in a good range of after schools clubs that enhance their learning.
- The process that senior leaders have developed to link salaries, promotion and pupils' progress is not as rigorous as it might be. There is a regular programme of checks on the quality of teaching but this does not always link to the impact of teaching on pupils' progress.
- The school has a strong commitment to the promotion of equality and diversity. This is shown, for example, in its determined support for pupils with a disability or special educational needs and the good level of challenge offered to more able pupils in Year 6.
- Parents rightly value the nurturing atmosphere within the school that underpins pupils' good behaviour and positive atmosphere. All pupils feel valued as individuals.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted strongly. A recent project about life in European countries, including those represented by pupils new to the school contributed much to their understanding of life in the modern world. Opportunities to care for one another and the environment, to learn to play a musical instrument and to work in the style of famous artists enrich pupils' learning experiences.
- The local authority has monitored the school's development carefully and offered a good level of challenge to raise the skills of the governing body and improve achievement of lower attaining pupils.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements. All who work with pupils on a regular basis have undergone Criminal Records Bureau checks. Policies and procedures are checked for their effectiveness.

■ The governance of the school:

- Following the challenge of the last Ofsted Inspection, the governing body established a second full governor's meeting termly to focus upon school improvement through monitoring and checking the implementation of the school development and raising attainment plans. Governors do not always ask sufficiently challenging questions about the impact of these initiatives on pupils' progress. The governing body is aware that attainment in 2013 is likely to be low because of the exceptionally high number of pupils with complex learning needs in Year 6. They know how the performance at Key Stage 1 compares to that of other schools nationally. Members of the governing body have undergone training over the past year to help them to contribute more effectively to the school's self-evaluation. Through regular visits with a focus on issues in the school development plan they are familiar with the ways in which pupils are taught to read and write. Members of the governing body have ensured that there are clear processes for the performance management of staff that are linked suitably to pay. Finances are managed prudently. The governing body is forward thinking, already planning for forthcoming changes to the allocation of the budget and the impact this may have on the school. They have ensured that funds for pupils eligible for pupil premium are spent suitably to provide extra teaching time. The governors know that this is helping some younger pupils to make good progress.
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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	124605
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	402277
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	252
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Robin Potter
Headteacher	Elaine Hawes
Date of previous school inspection	25 November 2009
Telephone number	01728 602205
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