

Senacre Wood Primary School

Graveney Road, Maidstone, Kent, ME15 8QQ

Inspection dates 5–6 November 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Progress has not been consistently strong across the school, particularly in writing across Key Stage 2.
- In recent years pupils' progress has not been tracked regularly enough each year which has led to disappointing attainment overall.
- The teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they make) has not been good in Key Stage 1.
- The pace of change has been affected by the high number of staff changes in recent years; the school is now improving as staffing has become more settled.
- Not all pupils have the opportunity to respond to comments made when their work is marked and do not understand what they should do so that their learning improves, including in writing.

The school has the following strengths:

- Senacre Wood is a friendly school where the vision for 'Together Everyone Achieves More' is evident throughout the whole school.
- Reading is a real strength of the school. Many pupils read well. They value the library and the range of fiction books in the school.
- Leaders, including governors, want the school to improve and are ambitious for all pupils to fulfil their potential and have equal opportunities to succeed.
- Pupils behave well and know how to keep safe. They are very caring towards each other not only in lessons but also at play and lunchtimes. They fully understand what bullying is and would go to any adult for help if needed.
- Parents and carers fully appreciate the care and support their children receive. All who responded to the online questionnaire and those who spoke informally to inspectors agree that the school is well led and managed.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in all classes. They visited 17 lessons of which three were joint observations made with the headteacher. In addition inspectors visited assemblies, the breakfast club, looked at pupils' work in books and listened to them read.
- Discussions were held with leaders and managers, staff and pupils, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors met informally with parents and carers at the end of the school day and took account of the 23 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View).
- A number of documents were viewed including the school's own information about pupils' progress, the school's checks on its own effectiveness, the development plan, information regarding checks on teachers' and the school's effectiveness, records of how pupil premium funding is spent and its impact, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and safeguarding documents.
- The inspectors analysed 15 questionnaires from staff.

Inspection team

Gay Whent, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Bryan Meyer

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Senacre Wood Primary School is smaller than the average sized primary school.
- The school now has a settled staff following considerable changes in the last two years.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium (extra government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children looked after by the local authorities and children of service families) is above the national average. There are no pupils who are looked after by local authorities or children of service families at the school.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is higher than the national average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is lower than the national average. These pupils have a variety of barriers to learning.
- The school meets the government's 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 across the school so that more of it is outstanding by:
 - applying the school's marking policy consistently and setting clear 'next steps' for learning for each pupil, closely matched to their learning needs and abilities so that they know exactly what they are expected to do in order to improve
 - planning for pupils to have the time to respond to teachers' comments in their books so that they know how they can improve their work.
- Accelerate the rates of progress so that more pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 meet the expected levels, particularly in writing, by making sure that all teachers:
 - improve the effectiveness of the daily phonics lessons throughout Key Stage 1 so that pupils make good progress by checking pupils' learning rigorously and regularly
 - ensure that pupils know and understand how to improve their writing.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils **requires improvement**

- Pupils' achievement requires improvement because progress has not been consistently strong across the school over time. Although pupils achieved very well in reading in 2013 and broadly met national averages in mathematics, they made much lower than national rates of progress in writing. This is a current school priority for development.
- The teaching of phonics is improving since the purchase of a scheme with a systematic approach to improve achievement in reading and writing. In the past two years this has been disappointing at the end of Year 1 for all pupils. As a result of the school's actions, by the end of Year 2 pupils are now confidently using their knowledge of letters and sounds to read words they cannot recognise.
- Pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 has not been consistent across the last three years and fluctuates above and below national averages. Teachers now check and evaluate pupils' progress six times during the school year and this is already enabling standards to improve at a faster rate.
- Children join the Reception class with knowledge and skills that are below expectations for their age. As a result of good quality teaching they develop good personal, social and emotional skills which enable them to settle into school routines very quickly and start to benefit from all that school offers. Children changed quickly and impressively before their PE lesson which linked writing with dance. From the moment they arrive in the morning they make independent choices and focus on learning. They make good progress and are increasingly above average at the beginning of Year 1.
- By the end of Year 6 attainment is good in reading and above the national average. Pupils in Year 6 confidently share their love of books by their favourite author, Michael Morpurgo; many are reading one with the next lined up already!
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs achieve well in reading which is leading to higher attainment. This is because the support and resources they receive in learning to read ensure that provision is finely matched to their next learning steps. However some do not yet achieve as well in writing and mathematics because teaching of these subjects has not been as consistently effective in the past.
- Pupils who benefit from the pupil premium funding make good progress across the school as their needs are accurately identified and a range of effective strategies have been put into place to improve their learning. The funding has been used to provide small-group support, learning resources to support reading at home and funding for educational visits. Pupils who benefit from the premium reach similar levels of attainment to other pupils in the school in reading, writing and mathematics as measured by their average points scores at the end of Key Stage 2. Many more make good and better progress than other pupils in each subject.
- Pupils' progress across the school is now checked more regularly and methodically than in the past. The newly appointed assessment leader has made clear her expectations for how teachers and teaching assistants keep track of pupils' progress so that they can evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching. Older pupils in Key Stage 2 know their targets for reading, writing and mathematics well. They can explain what these mean. This is already having a very positive impact on improving progress.

The quality of teaching **is good**

- A large majority of teaching is good across the school; there are some examples of outstanding teaching. All teachers were observed teaching an effective lesson. In the past, partly as a result of the turbulence caused by many staffing changes, the quality of teaching across subjects and classes has fluctuated, teaching has not been as consistently effective and the rate of pupils' achievement was hindered as a result. Leaders have acted quickly to introduce checks that are

ensuring the quality of teaching is now good and sometimes better.

- Children in the Reception class get off to a very good start as soon as they arrive every morning because of high-quality teaching that captures their imagination and develops their learning skills well. A wide range of opportunities are available so that they are able to learn through play both inside and outside. All adults involved have a clear understanding about children's next learning steps.
- In one outstanding lesson, pupils reviewed their success criteria together and agreed what they had carried out well. All were engaged and acutely aware of what they needed to focus on in the next lesson as a priority. They understood that in order to check their answers relating to perimeter, they needed to subtract the lengths of the sides of the shapes in order.
- Less-able mathematicians are now encouraged to learn how to calculate through intensive, individual support. They have every opportunity to build their confidence through individually tailored lessons. This works outstandingly well. The teaching focuses on applying mathematics through talking and practical activity in a highly attractive and non-threatening environment.
- In the most effective lessons, teachers' questioning skills encourage, challenge and probe pupils' thinking so that they learn at a particularly brisk rate. Year 6 pupils concentrated on demanding 'concept cartoons' where a range of statements are presented for them so that through debate with a partner they select the correct statement. Where teachers ensure that activities relate to real life as much as possible they engage learners' attention very successfully.
- Teachers plan their lessons thoroughly and conscientiously together with their teaching assistants. They make sure that their learning activities are set at the right level of difficulty for the varying abilities of different groups of pupils; providing challenge for the most able and including those who find learning difficult. This has been a real focus for the school and the focus of school leaders' observations.
- Although teachers mark work conscientiously and regularly across the whole school, not all give constructive feedback so that pupils are not always aware of their next steps in learning. This is necessary for faster improvement in writing. Very few pupils are given time to reflect on and respond to their teacher's comments so that they can build on their learning. As a result teaching is not yet outstanding.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils are friendly and enthusiastic learners. They say that 'no matter what your learning difficulties are, pupils and teachers will help you'. They can think of very few aspects of the school which they wish to improve apart from more non-fiction books for their classrooms. Leaders are determined to ensure that all pupils fulfil their potential, have equal opportunities and that there is no discrimination.
- Pupils say that behaviour is good overall and that help is always at hand for those who do not behave well. They like the fact that they are able to choose special treats for good behaviour and have a greater choice if their good behaviour is sustained over time.
- The behaviour of pupils when moving around the school, at playtimes and at lunchtimes is consistently sensible – even throughout wet weather. Older pupils enjoy their roles as 'buddies' and take these very seriously. 'Buddies' praise the support they receive from midday supervisors who can always be depended upon 'to sort out poor behaviour'. Fostering good relationships is a very important priority for the school at all times and is also carried out very effectively by the family liaison officer.
- Pupils are very clear about what bullying means and what to do if it should arise. They say there is no bullying at the school. Pupils can explain exactly what to do in order to keep safe when using the internet both at school and at home. They say they are constantly reminded by staff, including the headteacher in assemblies.
- A vast majority of parents and carers and all staff strongly agree pupils are safe at the school.
- Behaviour is not yet outstanding as pupils' love for learning, although improving, does not yet show a very strong impact on their progress in writing.

- The breakfast club provides a calm and nutritious start to the day for quite a small number of pupils. Those who attend say they enjoy coming as it provides 'a good start to the day'. They have a wide range of activities to enjoy after their meal.
- Pupils enjoy school and look forward to coming to school every day. Through very carefully targeted support, attendance is improving at a faster rate than ever before. Attendance so far this term is above average.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and his deputy headteacher lead a wider and recently appointed leadership team which includes new middle leaders. They are working effectively together. New team members have wasted no time and are already having an impact through their rigorous approach centred on good teaching and improved outcomes for learners. Leadership and management are not yet outstanding as the impact of the new team has still to show improvements in achievement over a sustained period of time.
- All leaders share a strong commitment to drive the school forward and are doing so with great determination. For example, timetables for checks on teaching and learning have been in place since the start of term, pupils' progress is being reviewed at the end of every six weeks, and observations and work scrutinies have already been carried out with evaluations in place highlighting what the school is already doing well and what needs to be carried out next.
- The school's self-evaluation is accurate and honest, focused on improving the outcomes in writing across the school and ensuring that teaching is always consistently good with more that is outstanding. Professional development is closely matched to improving achievement. The school shows good capacity to improve. The recently appointed assessment leader has put into place an improved system for checking pupils' progress across the school which links to the headteacher's overall assessment system. This is already showing signs of an improved impact on learning.
- The curriculum provides a focus on cultural diversity across all ages. It also promotes pupils' spiritual, moral and social development well. Pupils say they enjoy all their lessons. They would like to learn another language and if given the choice this would be Spanish.
- The local authority is currently providing appropriate support for the school's focus on improving achievement, ensuring teaching is consistently good and enabling the new subject leaders to carry out their roles as effectively as possible.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are fully aware of the school's strengths and have a very realistic understanding of its specific areas for improvement. They know the school is improving. They are aware of the qualities of their strong leadership team and challenge the school well, asking searching questions. Governors are actively involved in school development planning from draft stages and link their visits and learning walks to its priorities. They are fully aware of the achievement of pupils at the school and although governors are keen to point out improvements and successes over time they have attended training so that they are able to fully understand how to analyse and evaluate data and compare the school with all schools nationally. Governors are knowledgeable about the way in which the school's leadership has tackled underperformance and how it is focused on improving teaching. They have a good understanding of management of teachers' performance and ensure that this is linked directly to both rewarding good teaching and also providing staff training. Finance is carefully allocated and monitored, including specific amounts such as the pupil premium and sports funding, which is used to promote a higher participation in sport across the school, which is sustainable over time and raising pupils' awareness of its impact on their health and well-being. Governors meet their statutory responsibilities, including those for safeguarding.

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	118526
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	426604

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	203
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andy Bax
Headteacher	Peter Hellman
Date of previous school inspection	19 November 2008
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