

Sauncey Wood Primary School

Pickford Hill, Harpenden, AL5 5HL

Inspection dates 13–14 March 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
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 good school.

- Most pupils make good progress and some do exceptionally well at Key Stage 2.
- The school provides outstanding support to pupils who need extra help with their learning. This aspect of the school's work is led extremely well.
- Teaching is good and there are some outstanding elements, especially in Years 5 and 6.
- Pupils behave well and feel safe in school. They have good attitudes to learning.
- Teaching and learning are good in the base for pupils with speech, language and communication difficulties.
- The school works well in partnership with parents. It has some excellent links with other agencies and therapists.
- Senior leaders and the governing body provide good leadership. They have made sure that good achievement and teaching have been maintained since the previous inspection.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Occasionally, teachers give pupils work that is too hard for some or too easy for others.
- At times, teachers concentrate too closely on the group of pupils they are working with and do not check how well the rest of the class is doing.
- Some pupils find it difficult to use their knowledge of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division when solving problems in mathematics.
- Subject leaders do not all contribute fully to school improvement.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team visited 22 lessons. Four observations were done jointly with the assistant headteacher. The inspectors also observed two assemblies, looked at playground and lunchtime arrangements and listened to pupils reading.
- Meetings were held with the assistant headteacher, subject leaders for English and mathematics, the teacher in charge of the special resource base, and the inclusion co-ordinator. The lead inspector met with the Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors and held a telephone discussion with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspection team took into account the 69 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and 31 completed staff questionnaires.
- The inspection team looked at the school's work and at documentation, including leaders' evaluation of the school's effectiveness, the school development plan, information relating to safeguarding, records of pupils' attainment and progress, and at pupils' books and learning journals (which contain samples of children's work in the Early Years Foundation Stage).

Inspection team

Margaret Goodchild, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Keith Pullen

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average-sized primary school although numbers have increased since the previous inspection.
- There has been an increase in the proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and this is now broadly average, though fewer pupils speak English as an additional language than in schools nationally.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium is above average. (This is additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and looked after children.)
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well above average.
- The school has specially resourced provision for pupils with special educational needs. This provides for up to 10 pupils in Years 3 to 6 who have a statement for their speech, language and communication difficulties. There are currently eight pupils in the base.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- At the time of the inspection, the headteacher was absent and the school was being led by the assistant headteacher.
- Breakfast and after-school clubs are provided on the school premises but these are separately registered and, therefore, inspected separately.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of pupils who make more than expected progress and improve teaching so that it is outstanding by:
 - developing pupils' skills in using their knowledge of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division in solving problems in mathematics
 - always giving pupils work that is not too easy and not too hard
 - making sure that when teachers concentrate on helping a particular group of pupils, they also check on how much progress other pupils are making.
- Build on existing strengths in leadership and increase the rate of school improvement by making sure that all subject leaders are clear about their role in raising achievement and improving the quality of teaching in their areas.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills that are below those expected for their age. A strong focus on teaching phonics (the sounds that letters make) in the Reception class and when pupils move up to Key Stage 1 means that the school's results in the Year 1 phonics screening were well above average in 2013.
- From the start of the Early Years Foundation Stage to the end of Year 2, pupils make good progress to reach broadly average standards. Since the previous inspection, there has been an improvement in pupils' attainment at Key Stage 1.
- A number of pupils join the school during Key Stage 2, including those with a statement of special educational needs who attend the base for pupils with speech, language and communication difficulties. The prior attainment of pupils at Key Stage 2 is low. This explains why progress at Key Stage 2 is good - and it was outstanding for some groups of pupils in 2013 - even though standards at the end of Year 6 are average.
- Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds do as well as other pupils and those who speak English as an additional language receive good support. The school provides numerous support programmes for pupils who need extra help with their learning. As a result of support carefully tailored to their needs, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs and pupils supported by pupil-premium funding frequently make exceptional progress.
- In 2013, the attainment of pupils eligible for the pupil premium was a year ahead of their classmates in reading, a term ahead in English grammar, punctuation and spelling and in line with the rest of the class in mathematics. It was only in writing that their attainment was a year and a half behind that of their classmates. Good improvements in writing across the school mean that this gap is now narrowing.
- Pupils in the base for speech, language and communication difficulties make good progress, particularly in their speaking and listening, and in understanding new vocabulary. Once they are able to do so, pupils integrate into mainstream lessons for some subjects.
- The most-able pupils make good progress. In 2013, an above average proportion of pupils gained higher levels in mathematics and reading. Pupils' books show that the most-able older pupils are now also producing some high quality writing. Just occasionally, work is too easy for the most-able pupils when the whole class works together with the teacher, but the tasks they undertake afterwards usually provide them with the right level of challenge.
- Pupils make good progress in a number of subjects, as well as in English and mathematics. For example, there is some attractive artwork on display, including work in the style of other artists and imaginative fabric printing. Pupils make good progress in applying their English and mathematics skills in a range of subjects.
- Following a dip in children's attainment at the end of the Reception Year in 2013, the school took firm action to improve children's learning and inspection evidence shows that this is having a positive effect. More children are now making good progress and they all benefit from the much-improved outdoor area.
- While most pupils make good progress in mathematics, the achievement of some is held back

because they find it difficult to apply their knowledge of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division to solving problems. This slows their progress in some lessons.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching is usually at least good, including in English and mathematics, and there is some outstanding teaching especially in Years 5 and 6.
- Teachers generally have high expectations and good subject knowledge. They place strong emphasis on teaching subject vocabulary and correct grammar, punctuation and spelling. In mathematics lessons, teachers focus on making sure pupils understand mathematical language, especially when they are learning new ways of working.
- Teachers have positive relationships with their pupils and promote an enthusiasm for learning. They provide clear explanations and plenty of opportunities for pupils to ask and answer questions as well as to develop their ideas through discussion. Teachers make good use of pupils' ideas and clarify any misconceptions in order to move learning on.
- This was particularly evident in a lesson in Years 5 and 6 on fair trade. The teacher's excellent questioning pushed pupils to think very deeply about the topic and they came up with some sophisticated questions of their own for the rest of the class to consider. For example, one asked, 'What would happen if a black market developed?'
- The school has placed a strong focus on instilling in pupils a love of reading. Good quality books are readily available in the spacious library and specific books have been purchased to appeal to particular groups of pupils. In guided-reading sessions, teachers' careful choice of texts means that pupils make good progress.
- There has been a recent improvement in teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage and an increasing amount of it is now good. Work to improve the outdoor area has resulted in some exciting learning opportunities for children. They gain much enjoyment from using the stage with dressing-up materials, the writing shed and the 'police station'. Disabled children and those who have special educational needs receive outstanding support from the teaching assistant who works with them.
- In the rest of the school, teaching assistants make a good contribution to pupils' progress. They often make use of a range of equipment, for example in mathematics, to help pupils to understand new ideas.
- Teaching is good in the base for pupils with speech, language and communication difficulties. Pupils' learning difficulties are carefully assessed and staff use pictures and objects very well to help them to understand new vocabulary. They provide them with good advice about how to manage their learning difficulties and teaching assistants are very clear what is expected of them
- At times, teachers concentrate too closely on the group of pupils they are working with and do not check how well the rest of the class is doing. The progress of some pupils slows when this happens, most typically those pupils of average ability who are not receiving direct support from a teaching assistant.
- Occasionally, work is too easy or too difficult for some pupils. Teachers do not always give the most-able pupils hard enough work when the whole class works with the teacher for part of the lesson.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They behave well in lessons, at playtime and around the school. Where work is neither too easy nor too hard, pupils' behaviour is exceptionally good. Pupils are courteous and polite, and respond well to teachers' expectations. Pupils and parents strongly agree that behaviour is good.
- Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to learning and take a pride in their achievements. They are nearly always fully engaged in lessons. They try hard, cooperate well with one another and persevere with their work.
- The school has good systems for managing pupils' behaviour and close links with outside agencies to support pupils with behavioural, social and emotional difficulties. These are used to very good effect where necessary to support pupils who join Sauncey Wood during Key Stage 2. As a result, pupils who had previously been excluded from other schools have met with a good level of success in this school.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good, and pupils are aware of how to keep themselves safe. They are clear about the precautions to take when using the internet because they learn about this in e-safety lessons.
- Records show that bullying is rare and that any incidents are carefully checked by senior leaders. Pupils understand what bullying is, including cyber-bullying, and they say that staff soon sort out any problems between pupils. Indeed, pupils get on very well together in class and at playtimes.
- Behaviour is not outstanding because pupils do not always take as much care as they could in the presentation of work. On occasion, staff are not quick enough to communicate high expectations if a few pupils lose their concentration during lessons although this is never allowed to develop into disruption.
- Attendance is broadly average and improving. This is because the school has worked well with parents to emphasise the importance of their children always coming to school and involved outside agencies to bring about improvement.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and senior leaders have been successful in maintaining the good quality of education found at the previous inspection during a period when the number of pupils on roll has increased. Teamwork among the staff is strong and leaders at all levels are committed to providing pupils with a good education in an atmosphere where they feel valued.
- Senior leaders regularly observe lessons, talk to pupils about their work and look at their books. This provides them with valuable information about teaching and learning and they give helpful feedback to teachers about what could be improved. Where gaps are found in pupils' work or in teachers' knowledge, training is provided to improve teaching and learning.
- Senior leaders regularly meet with teachers to check on pupils' progress which ensures that staff are held to account and means that leaders are quick to identify pupils who need extra help. It also ensures that all pupils receive equal opportunities and that there is no discrimination. The school is particularly successful in supporting pupils who need extra help with their learning and this aspect of leadership is a major strength.
- The inclusion co-ordinator provides outstanding leadership. Her focus on the needs of disabled

pupils and those who have special educational needs and who are known to be eligible for the pupil premium means that these pupils do exceptionally well. She also provides strong leadership for the teaching and learning of pupils who speak English as an additional language and those with particular gifts and talents.

- The leadership of the base for pupils with speech, language and communication difficulties is good. There are effective systems in place for checking pupils' progress and staff work extremely well with the speech and language therapist. The base is very well resourced with specialist equipment and materials to support pupils' learning, not only in English and mathematics but also in other areas.
- Subject leadership in English and mathematics is good. Information gained from checks on teaching and pupils' work is used well to identify development priorities and to evaluate how effective previous action has been. Leadership varies in other subjects. Although subject leaders gather information about their subjects, they do not all use it to take a strong lead in improving teaching and raising achievement.
- Learning opportunities meet pupils' academic and personal needs well. The school promotes pupils' literacy and numeracy skills effectively in a range of subjects. Lessons and topics are enhanced by various educational visits and by clubs covering art, ecology, information and communication technology, music and sport. The school fosters pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Displays of pupils' work show that they now have good opportunities to learn about a range of other countries and different ways of life.
- The school is making good use of its sport funding to improve pupils' health and well-being and to develop their sporting skills. Sauncey Wood is active in inter-school sports competitions and funding has been used to increase pupils' involvement in after-school sports clubs and in sporting opportunities in the local area. The school is also using sport funding to improve teachers' skills so that there will be improved teaching of sport and physical education in the future.
- The local authority provides good support to the school and is well informed about its work. The school has received support in improving the Early Years Foundation Stage and training in mathematics teaching. The local authority provides regular support to senior leaders in checking on the quality of teaching and analysing data.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body makes a good contribution to school improvement and governors are well informed about the school's work. Governors conduct regular visits and produce detailed reports of their findings. Governors ask senior leaders challenging questions and meet with other staff who have responsibility for important aspects of the school's work. They have a good grasp of data and keep a check on how pupil-premium funding is spent. They know that these pupils and others who need extra help do particularly well. They ensure that the most effective teachers are rewarded and are well informed about how any underperformance is tackled. The governing body makes sure that the school has robust systems in place for safeguarding pupils.

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	117102
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	440548

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	187
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Helen Parkinson
Headteacher	John Burt
Date of previous school inspection	1 December 2010
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