

Saxmundham Primary School

Brook Farm Road, Saxmundham, Suffolk, IP17 1XQ

Inspection dates 2–3 July 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	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.

- Achievement is good because from their different starting points pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The quality of teaching is consistently good or better. As a result, the great majority of pupils are making the progress that they should.
- Pupils are able to use their literacy and numeracy skills in different subjects and this helps them improve these skills and knowledge.
- Behaviour and safety are good. Pupils show commitment and enthusiasm when learning and are proud of their school. Attendance has risen to the national average level.
- Senior leaders and governors have brought about improvements to teaching and pupil achievement with determination and clarity. They know the school well and their work is carefully planned.
- Subject leaders for literacy and numeracy provide effective leadership. They take responsibility for the teaching and progress in their areas.
- The commitment of teachers and support staff is a significant strength of the school. They work as a professional team and are fully supportive of leaders.
- Governors are an active, committed group who take their responsibilities seriously and provide good challenge and support to leaders.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Written comments about how well pupils are doing are not yet consistent. They do not always help pupils understand what they need to do in order to make improvements to their work.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 28 lessons of which two were jointly observed with members of the school's leadership team.
- A number of shorter visits took place and inspectors also observed the work of teaching assistants outside main classrooms.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' work from subjects including writing, mathematics, science and different topic books.
- Inspectors studied a range of evidence including the school's self-evaluation documents, improvement plan, pupil progress records and information about the setting of targets for teachers.
- Inspectors studied school policies for safeguarding, behaviour and the curriculum.
- Meetings were held with three groups of pupils.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders, subject leaders, governors and a local authority adviser.
- Pupils from Year 1 and Year 2 read to inspectors.
- Inspectors met with some parents at the start of each day.
- Inspectors took into account the comments and responses from 20 staff questionnaires.
- Inspectors took into account the 10 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire (Parent View) and one letter received from a parent.

Inspection team

David Turner, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Simon Thompson	Additional Inspector
Maria Rees-Johnson	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an average size primary school.
- Following changes to local arrangements for education, the school has grown in size in recent years to become a full primary school for children aged 4 to 11 years of age. The Year 6 pupils in 2013 were the first group to take the Key Stage 2 tests.
- An above-average proportion of pupils have joined the school in the higher year groups.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or in the care of the local authority and for whom the school receives the pupil premium (additional government funding) is below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have a special educational needs supported at school action is above the national average. The proportion supported at school action plus or through a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- A small number of pupils attend alternative education on a part-time basis, at The Thomas Wolsey Special School and The Bridge School.
- The school is part of the Suffolk County Council school improvement network of schools.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' achievement further by:
 - ensuring they receive written comments on their work which advise them more precisely on how to improve in their different subjects, so they can make the best possible progress
 - providing more opportunities for all teachers to share the best examples of written assessment which already exists in the school.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Achievement has rapidly improved for all pupils on roll. It is now good. Standards have risen firmly across year groups and subjects since the previous inspection. The current progress of most pupils is good. These improvements have happened during a time of considerable change and with a large number of pupils joining the school at non-standard times.
- In 2013, although they had made good progress during their final year, Year 6 standards were lower than average, especially in reading. While the progress of middle and lower ability pupils was similar to that expected for their age, the numbers making good progress were far fewer. More-able pupils were more successful although numbers making good progress were not high enough.
- School information about pupils' progress, which has been internally moderated and externally checked, demonstrates that the proportion of Year 6 pupils gaining Level 4 and Level 5 will rise strongly in 2014. Equally, the numbers of pupils making good progress is set to rise in all subjects. These improvements result from improvements in the quality of teaching across the school and especially in Key Stage 2.
- When they enter Reception Year, children's understanding and skills are well below levels typical for their age. They make good progress so that by the time they enter Year 1, they have skills similar to national expectations. They make sufficient gains in basic skills and their level of personal development has improved as a result of effective support.
- Standards in Key Stage 1 represent good progress and are still rising. Pupils in Year 1 are making good progress in all subjects. School information, confirmed by inspection evidence, shows that Year 2 pupils are likely to enter Year 3 with standards below average, representing good progress from their starting points at the school.
- The development of pupils' understanding in phonics (the sounds made by letters and words) is good. This is the result of very careful teaching and thorough monitoring which ensures every pupil's progress is checked regularly and any difficulties tackled quickly. In the 2013 phonics check the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard was similar to the national average.
- Pupils of lower and middle ability are making improved progress because they are carefully supported to understand how to recall their knowledge more thoroughly and understand each step as they use it in reading, writing or mathematics.
- Pupils of all abilities are developing regular and successful reading habits and skills. They read confidently and show a good understanding of the story or book being studied. They are also able to give opinions about characters and the likely direction of a plot, based on their understanding and reasoning skills. In one example, a pupil gave an interesting and intelligent assessment of the horse's character in *Black Beauty*.
- The achievement of the most-able pupils is good. Their learning is supported by work which is suitably challenging. One good example was in a Year 4 mathematics lesson where pupils tackled complex problems to identify a mystery number.
- Pupils' achievement in writing is good across the school. This is because pupils are able to apply their knowledge of writing techniques across a wide range of work and styles. In science they

effectively describe and explain processes while in creative writing they learn to adapt folklore and religious stories.

- The achievement of pupils in mathematics is a significant improvement. They are more confident and skilful in their use of calculations and are encouraged to explain how rules work as part of their learning.
- Marking provides useful information for pupils about how well they have done and they receive good verbal guidance to help them improve further. However, the written comments of their teachers do not help them understand what to do to make the best progress of which they are capable.
- The achievement of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is good, taking account of their many different starting points and needs. In some cases it is exceptional. Their achievement is a result of effective assessment, careful planning for support and teaching and thorough, regular monitoring of their progress.
- The achievement of pupils educated off-site is good. They receive well-planned support and their progress is monitored carefully by the school.
- The achievement of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is good. In the 2013 Year 6 tests they were approximately 14 months behind their classmates in reading, writing and mathematics. However, these gaps have been reduced by about one half.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good across the school and none is inadequate. The last year has seen significant improvements resulting in consistently good quality teaching.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils are good. Teachers set demanding work but they are very patient and encouraging and the pupils know they are being supported to try as hard as they can. In lessons, teachers carefully check on pupils' understanding and help them overcome difficulty. As a result, pupils remain motivated and committed to their work.
- Teachers use progress information to carefully organise the support for pupils of different abilities and achievement is improving across the school. In some lessons, pupils leave to receive additional help from a teaching assistant or study together as part of a challenging task. In others, teachers support one group for a period of time to make sure they have secured their knowledge while the other pupils start more quickly at a different level of work.
- Teaching is well organised for the most-able pupils. They receive work which is demanding and interesting. In a Year 4 mathematics lesson, one group of pupils worked alone at complex equations involving palindromic numbers.
- Teaching is carefully planned to help pupils improve their knowledge of reading, writing and mathematics and to tackle increasingly harder work. Teachers ask the pupils to explain how they are using their knowledge and check they understand before they move on to the next part of their work. This avoids mistakes and deepens their understanding of their main subjects.
- Teachers use questioning well in order to check on pupils' understanding but they also challenge them to think deeply. In a Year 6 science lesson pupils were supported to predict and explain,

through highly effective and thoughtful questioning, what might happen if the conditions of an experiment were altered.

- Teaching assistants make a highly effective contribution to pupils' learning. This is because they work as a team with teaching staff and understand the needs of the pupils they support very well. Their support for individuals and groups is carefully planned as part of the effective organisation of teaching across the school.
- Pupils' books and other work are marked regularly and grades and comments help them to understand how well they have learned. However, the use of comments and progress information sheets to help pupils understand how they can achieve their very best is less consistent.
- The quality of teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good because children are supported to succeed in the main learning areas of the curriculum. There is a good balance of teaching which leads and teaching which allows pupils to do things for themselves. The use of support staff is good.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They are welcoming, polite towards visitors and treat them with the utmost respect. Pupils' very positive attitudes make a significant contribution to the caring atmosphere of this school.
- Pupils' are genuinely curious, eager and enthusiastic to learn and work hard in all lessons. This is because of the good teaching they receive which captures their interest. Pupils respect the way lessons are taught and know that their teachers want them to do their best. This strong relationship supports the sense of pride pupils have in their school.
- Across the school, all adults set a good example to the pupils by their patient, encouraging manner towards them and their consistent use of the effective behaviour policy.
- Pupils are taught to be well-organised and equipped for school and they wear their uniforms with pride. This includes the youngest who are supported to manage themselves as part of their personal development.
- Pupils behave well around the school, at break and lunch time. They are very sensible at lunch time and show great maturity when organising themselves for their food and taking their places in the hall. They require little direction and enjoy the school lunches.
- Pupils are encouraged to take on many responsibilities as school leaders. As a result they lead assemblies, sports activities, organise charity campaigns and have more recently become very involved in environmental projects. Older pupils also take on roles in supporting younger members of the school during break and lunchtime.
- Attendance is improving and is now at the national average levels. School leaders communicate high expectations about attendance to all families and work with sensitivity to ensure regular attendance.
- Pupils say that bullying is rare and parents who spoke with inspectors agreed. Pupils understand what bullying means and recognise different types including cyber or racist bullying.

- There are no recorded exclusions at the school and serious incidents are low in number. Inspectors found that incidents regarding bullying of any kind are carefully recorded and resolved effectively.
- Those pupils who have been identified with specific behavioural needs are well-supported and school leaders work closely with their families. As a result, they cope well in school.
- The school's work to keep children safe and secure is good. There are well-organised systems in place which support well-being and safety. The quality of care is exceptional in some cases and has allowed a number of children to achieve their very best despite a range of often profound personal difficulties or disabilities.
- As a result of the school's guidance concerning the use of the internet, pupils are very clear about risks and how to avoid them.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, ably supported by her leadership team, leads with ambition, determination and principle. Staff are totally supportive of leaders and positive about their school. They feel well-supported in achieving the demanding goals set by leaders and there is a strong team ethos among all adults employed at the school.
- Leaders' evaluation of the quality of teaching is accurate. They carefully compare what they see in lesson visits to the quality of pupils' work and assessment information for different subjects. This helps them judge how well teaching is supporting the pupils' learning. As a result, they have been able to advise staff on how to adapt their teaching to improve the achievement of pupils in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Arrangements for checking and managing the performance of teachers are well-organised. Teachers' targets are closely linked to the achievement of pupils and pay progression ensures good teaching is rewarded.
- Subject leaders for literacy and numeracy make a good contribution to school improvement. They ensure that other subjects support consistently good teaching of reading, writing and mathematics and are good role models for other teachers in terms of their own practice, planning and use of assessment.
- School improvement planning is highly effective. Leaders and governors keep focused on a small number of important priorities and set out what must be achieved in careful steps which all staff understand. They check on progress carefully.
- Leaders have a very accurate understanding of assessment and progress information for different year groups and subjects. They use this very well to set demanding targets, monitor progress and ensure teaching is adapted to prevent pupils from falling behind.
- The well-developed range of subjects support good achievement in mathematics, reading and writing because pupils have opportunities to practice their literacy and numeracy skills across many subjects, including sciences.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength. The curriculum supports

their appreciation of other religions and cultures, the arts and music. They are particularly concerned with the future of their planet and have closely supported environmental projects including the building of an eco-lodge on the school site. Their charitable works help them reflect on the lives of others in Britain and other continents.

- Parents are supportive of the school's leaders who consult with them regularly. They told inspectors that the school is delivering a good quality of education and preparing their children well for the future.
- Safeguarding is effective and meets statutory requirements.
- The school does not work in isolation and is a member of the Suffolk network which helps leaders share practice. The school has received effective support from the local authority in the period since the previous inspection. Advisers have undertaken reviews of teaching and the senior adviser has assisted leaders to learn from examples of good teaching in other schools.
- The school makes imaginative and effective use of the primary sports funding grant from the government. As a result, there are far higher levels of pupil participation in sports clubs and competitive games.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are a dedicated and effective team. They have a detailed knowledge of their school, including the strengths of teaching and those remaining areas for improvement. Consequently, they are very clear about the priorities for the school. They use this knowledge well to help drive improvement, by working closely with senior leaders and teachers. Governors visit the school regularly and take on specialist roles in different areas. Their close knowledge of the school is strengthened by their understanding of performance information, resulting from high quality training. This helps them ask challenging questions and hold the school to account as well as offering well-informed support when reviewing improvement plans. Governors' understanding of the use of setting targets for teachers to raise the quality of teaching is effective and they make a clear link between performance, achievement and pay. Likewise, they understand the use of the additional funding to reduce gaps in pupils' achievement and can explain the results of the spending.

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	432103

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	272
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Robin Potter
Headteacher	Elaine Hawes
Date of previous school inspection	4 December 2012
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