

Prae Wood Primary School

King Harry Lane, St Albans, AL3 4HZ

Inspection dates 18–19 June 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.

- Children have a good start to their school life and they achieve well in the Early Years Foundation Stage because of the good teaching they receive.
- Older pupils continue to make good progress because they are taught well and given effective support if they fall behind.
- Pupils make particularly good progress in reading.
- Teaching assistants contribute well to pupils' learning.
- A wide range of additional activities out of lessons supports spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. Their attendance is good and this supports the good progress they make. They say they feel safe in school and show positive attitudes to learning. Pupils are polite, courteous and caring towards each other and adults.
- The headteacher's leadership provides clear direction for all staff. She is well supported by the deputy headteacher. They have worked effectively with teachers to improve the quality of teaching. As a result, pupils do well.
- Governors provide good support. They keep themselves well informed and rigorously check on how well the school is doing.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Although improving, pupils' progress in writing and mathematics is not quite as good as it is in reading. In some lessons, work is not set at the right level, especially for those who find it easy.
- Until recently, opportunities for pupils to write at length in other subjects and to use and apply their basic mathematical skills in other subjects have been limited.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 16 lessons or parts of lessons, several of which were observed jointly with the headteacher or deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors observed pupils at play, at lunch and as they moved around school.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and looked at the work in their books.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and different groups of people involved in the school. These included pupils, a governor, members of the teaching staff and a representative from the local authority. The lead inspector held telephone calls with the Chair of the Governing Body and the Chair of the Finance Committee.
- Inspectors took into account the 71 responses to Ofsted’s online questionnaire (Parent View). Inspectors also spoke to parents at the beginning of the school day. Inspectors reviewed the responses to the 31 staff questionnaires completed during the inspection.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documents, including plans for improvement, records of the school’s checks on pupils’ and teachers’ performance, safeguarding and attendance documents, minutes of meetings of the governing body and school policies.

Inspection team

Susan Thomas-Pounce, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
David Gutmann	Additional Inspector
Nicholas Flesher	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Prae Wood Primary School is larger than most primary schools.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is well below average. In this school, the additional funding is for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals or who are looked after by the local authority.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the proportion of pupils making rapid progress in writing and mathematics to match that in reading by:
 - making sure that work is always pitched at an appropriate level, with enough challenge for the most able.
- Improve the quality of teaching in mathematics and writing by:
 - giving pupils more opportunities to write at length and to use their skills in other subjects
 - ensuring pupils are taught mental mathematics strategies effectively to improve their confidence and fluency
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical skills and knowledge to solve problems, both in mathematics lessons and other subjects.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children start school with knowledge and understanding that are generally typical for their age, with some at lower levels of attainment. Children make good progress in Nursery and Reception where there is a careful balance between the development of good personal skills and good levels of communication and learning through investigation and enquiry. Children show high levels of independence and they are well prepared for Year 1.
- Pupils' positive attitudes to learning help them to make good progress in all year groups.
- The school teaches reading well, particularly in the Reception Year and Key Stage 1. The results of the Year 1 screening in phonics (letters and the sounds they represent) were above average in 2013. Pupils learn well in the regular phonics group lessons because the work is pitched at just the right level.
- Pupils in Year 6 read widely, and confidently discuss the books they are reading. Results in the Year 6 reading and grammar, punctuation and spelling tests were well above average in 2013. The proportion making very rapid progress remains higher in reading than in mathematics and writing.
- Higher-ability pupils are usually given work of a suitable level of difficulty, which engages them well in their learning. In 2013, the proportions achieving the higher levels in national assessments by the end of Key Stage 2 were well above average in reading, and in grammar, punctuation and spelling. The proportions reaching the higher Level 5 in writing and mathematics were not as high as in the other subjects, but were still above average. Similarly, the proportion of pupils reaching the higher Level 3 in assessments in writing and mathematics is less than in reading at the end of Key Stage 1.
- Provision for the few pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs has improved. These pupils make good progress in separate individualised lessons and within the class lessons as tasks are set at the right level for them. This helps them to make at least similar progress to other pupils.
- The very few pupils supported through the pupil premium funding now make similar rates of progress to their classmates. The additional funding has been used well to provide individual support as well as small group work. There were too few eligible pupils in Year 6 in 2013 to comment on their attainment without risk of identifying individuals.
- Pupils' work in books shows that they have good opportunities to write in a range of styles. However, progress in writing is sometimes limited because there are too few chances for pupils to write at length and produce work at a higher level. Although progress in mathematics is good and several pupils are on track to reach the high Level 6 in mathematics, pupils are not given enough opportunities to apply their mathematical knowledge and skills to investigate and solve problems, either in mathematics lessons or other subjects.
- The current good rate of progress being made in all year groups and by all groups of pupils reflects the success of the school's focus on ensuring equal opportunities and eliminating any discrimination for all pupils.
- The school allocates the primary sports funding appropriately to improve pupils' skills and participation. Early evaluation of its impact indicates improved attitudes and higher participation,

particularly for previously less-active pupils.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers have high expectations for their pupils, and ensure that they learn in classrooms where the climate is extremely positive and encouraging, and where relationships are good.
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage engages children's interest and enthusiasm. For example, children were seen to be absorbed in an observational still life drawing of a wide variety of fruits. They eagerly discussed their art and then went on to talk about where and how the fruit might grow. Adults record children's achievements accurately, are fully aware of how well individuals are doing and carefully plan what they will learn next. Adults talk with children a lot, guiding their work successfully by asking astute questions.
- Across the school, much of the teaching is lively and engages pupils' interest. The positive impact of this was seen in a Year 6 science lesson, when pupils were learning about the effects of diseases on the circulatory system. Pupils were engaged in a challenging activity, which made them think and question each other. They discussed their learning in groups and this helped them to put together balanced arguments, which they later enjoyed presenting to the class.
- Teachers work well together and make good use of individual strengths and expertise. This is making a positive contribution to raising standards and accelerating pupils' progress across all groups of pupils. Marking and feedback are generally accurate and provide pupils with advice on how to improve their work further.
- Teaching assistants support pupils' learning well. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, they work effectively with all groups of children. Throughout the school, they support and challenge disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs effectively so that they make the same good progress as other pupils.
- Skills in reading, writing and mathematics are developed well, although there is not enough focus on writing at length to develop pupils' stamina for writing. Despite the consistent approach to the teaching and learning of mental calculation strategies, not all pupils are confident and fluent in their use of different strategies.
- Most tasks are planned carefully to meet the different abilities of pupils. As a result, most pupils make good progress towards individual targets. However, this good practice is not always evident. Occasionally, work is not set at the right level and feedback during the lesson is not sufficient to help pupils make faster progress by extending themselves.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils of all ages, including in the Early Years Foundation Stage, have positive attitudes and approach their learning with enthusiasm. Pupils work well together when this is required and encourage one another when learning is a challenge. However, pupils do not always show initiative in their work and there are a few occasions when pupils do not get on with their work without the advice and support of an adult.
- At lunch and break times, pupils interact well together. They organise games with each other and willingly share the wealth of resources that are available. There is a good atmosphere in the dining hall while pupils are having their lunch. Pupils conduct themselves well around the school.

They are very welcoming to visitors.

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. All parents responding to Parent View rightly feel their children are safe. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe at school and are confident that any issues that worry them would be dealt with promptly and effectively. They show a good understanding of internet safety.
- Pupils are aware of the different forms bullying can take and know what to do if they ever need help. They say bullying, '...occasionally happens, but it is soon sorted out by teachers.'
- Pupils appreciate the opportunities they have to engage in a range of additional activities during and after the school day. They particularly like the chances they have to be physically active in lessons, at break time and in after-school clubs.
- Pupils willingly take on a range of responsibilities around the school, including representing their class on the school council. They are mature and responsible in the way they set about these tasks. Older pupils take on the roles of playground leaders and buddies to support younger pupils at lunchtime.
- Attendance is above average and the number of pupils who are persistently absent is below average. Pupils are punctual to school so lessons begin on time.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher leads the school well. Together with senior leaders, she has successfully tackled the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. The school has an accurate overall view of its effectiveness and impact on pupils' progress.
- Teachers with responsibilities for leading subjects have clearly defined roles and responsibilities and are held to account by senior leaders and governors. Lesson observations, work scrutiny and drop-in observations take place regularly.
- The use of information about pupils' progress is effective. Those with leadership roles across the school work closely with class teachers to check on pupils' progress. They regularly review the support that each pupil requires to meet their needs.
- Performance management procedures are fully in place for all members of staff. Teachers' targets for development link closely to the school's action plan so everyone works towards the same goals. An effective system is in place to ensure any training needs are identified and met, and robust measures are taken to eliminate any inadequate teaching.
- The lively curriculum provides all pupils with access to a wide range of opportunities. Provision of specialist music and sports tuition, together with a varied range of after-school clubs, means pupils can try activities that are new to them. Excellent use is made of the local environment and its rich cultural history to excite and enthuse pupils in their learning. Links with local businesses, including the local supermarket, introduce pupils to the world of work.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is developed well, underpinned by the very positive relationships in the school. Pupils have regular opportunities to celebrate their achievements, for example, through assemblies and displays, and this successfully raises their self-esteem. The school has links with a school in Zambia and this extends the wide range of

experiences and cultures that pupils learn about.

- The school's use of the primary sports funding is beginning to impact on pupils' performance. For example, improved resources available at break times and extra after-school provision has helped pupils to be more active.
- Support from the local authority since the last inspection has been effective. They are successfully helping the school to improve the teaching of writing and mathematics.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have a well-organised structure of committees. These ensure that thorough systems and procedures are developed to challenge and support the school. Governors have useful skills in areas such as education, human resources and finance which they direct effectively to support and challenge school leaders. They have a good understanding of the school's performance data and how well they compare to national figures. They receive regular reports about the quality of teaching and know how it affects pupils' progress. Governors know the school well because they make regular visits and see it at work. They know how pupil premium and sports funding is spent and keep a careful eye on it to ensure it remains effective. Performance management is fully in place, including for the headteacher. Governors are fully aware of the link between decisions about pay and teachers' performance. Governors make sure that statutory responsibilities, including those for safeguarding, are fully in place and reviewed regularly.

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	117315
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	439581

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	330
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jackie Towndrow
Headteacher	Jackie Stephenson
Date of previous school inspection	17 March 2009
Telephone number	01727 751930
Fax number	N/A
Email address	admin@praewood.herts.sch.uk

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