

# Pinewood School

Hoe Lane, Ware, Hertfordshire SG12 9PB

## Inspection dates

17–18 May 2017

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders and governors have not acted quickly enough to secure a consistently good standard of provision since the school opened in 2014.
- Leaders do not yet use their monitoring information routinely enough to know the precise difference that they are making to the overall progress of pupils.
- Governors do not hold leaders robustly enough to account over pupils' progress, or on the impact of the additional funding that they receive for disadvantaged pupils.
- Leaders do not focus precisely enough on the progress that pupils are making when forming judgements about the quality of teaching. Leaders have an inflated view of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Leaders have not yet ensured that staff use assessment consistently well to plan lessons which facilitate rapid academic progress for pupils from their starting points. In particular, the most able pupils too often undertake tasks that are too easy for them.
- Some teachers do not plan learning that consistently interests, engages or enthuses pupils with their learning.
- Leaders and governors have not ensured that all school policies and the website are up to date.

### The school has the following strengths

- The work of the headteacher and his new senior team to create a broad curriculum that meets the bespoke needs of pupils is a strength in the school's provision.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. Staff use highly effective strategies to support pupils to develop self-discipline, self-esteem and good learning behaviours.
- The school's work to support pupils' personal development and welfare ensures that pupils become independent and confident young people. As a result, pupils successfully go on to highly appropriate post-16 education.
- Most parents, pupils and staff are effusive in their praise for the school. Pupils are very positive about how staff keep them safe.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that governors hold leaders to account more rigorously about the achievement of pupils from their varied starting points and the impact of the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils, and that policies and the website are up to date and reflect the practice in the school accurately.
- Ensure that leaders know the precise impact that their work is having on raising standards in the school by:
  - developing the quality of the school’s monitoring systems, so that all leaders routinely review the progress that pupils are making in all aspects of their learning and development
  - sharpening leaders’ evaluation of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that it takes greater account of pupils’ progress from their starting points
  - ensuring that staff’s personalised training needs in assessment, moderation and planning are more precisely reviewed and met.
- Raise the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that pupils make rapid progress from their starting points by:
  - using assessment information more precisely to plan learning in lessons and over time that builds on pupils’ prior learning effectively
  - ensuring that staff have the highest expectations about what pupils can achieve, and that the most able pupils, and those who are ready to achieve more, are identified and supported appropriately
  - sharing the effective practice that exists in the school so that pupils receive engaging and interesting activities in all subject areas.

An external review of governance should be undertaken to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the use of pupil premium funding should be undertaken to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- Since the school opened in September 2014, there has been a decline in standards. Leaders and governors identified these issues, but did not act quickly enough to maintain a good standard of provision. Leaders' recent work is not yet well embedded, nor consistent in the impact that it is having on improving pupils' progress.
- The headteacher has made the curriculum a priority for improvement since his appointment. The school's 'pathways system' is bespoke to the needs of pupils and offers them a wealth of opportunities including academic, outdoor adventure, Forest School and work experience. Pupils are also accessing an increasingly wide range of formal qualifications. However, leaders are not yet ensuring that pupils receive consistently high-quality teaching and assessment in these subjects.
- Middle leaders have not yet been given sufficient opportunity to develop subject-specific assessment in all areas of pupils' learning and development. Consequently, while there is greater consistency in the English and mathematics provision, leaders' new systems for assessment in other subject areas are not yet well embedded.
- Leaders have not ensured that the additional funding that they receive for disadvantaged pupils is making a difference to their achievement. Leaders spend the funding on an appropriate range of additional support and activities for pupils. However, leaders have not ensured that they have thoroughly evaluated the impact of this spending on pupils' outcomes and development.
- Leaders' new systems and processes for improving teaching are bringing improvements. For example, the new appraisal process is holding staff to greater account for their performance. However, leaders do not yet focus sharply enough on the progress that pupils are making from their various starting points. As a result, leaders sometimes have an overly positive view about the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Leaders know the strengths and weaknesses in the school's provision. They use this knowledge to provide significantly more training to staff that is relevant to pupils' needs and the new curriculum. Although much improved, staff training does not yet meet the personalised needs of some staff. In particular, training and moderation systems are not yet ensuring that staff plan effectively to challenge pupils to make rapid progress.
- Leaders and staff are ensuring that pupils' behavioural, social and emotional needs are being well met. The school's 'communication profiles' for each pupil are based on a range of information about pupils' strengths, areas for development, likes and dislikes. Staff use these guides to develop effective classroom management strategies. Year team leaders support staff to continue to refine these strategies, so that pupils develop self-discipline and are ready to learn. As a result, the school is a calm and welcoming environment.

- Leaders ensure that they use funding for pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities effectively. Pupils receive appropriate support from external agencies and provision to support their well-being and development, as identified in their education, health and care plan. Pupils have access to a range of provision such as occupational therapists, speech and language consultants and significant outdoor activities, such as the school's own 'Pinewood Outdoors' programme. These opportunities meet pupils' specific needs and develop their self-esteem very effectively.
- The Year 7 catch-up funding is used to support pupils' ongoing literacy and communication needs through specific and bespoke intervention programmes. For example, those in the earlier stages of literacy and reading development access appropriate reading and phonics programmes to help them build their vocabulary and early reading skills. Leaders track these interventions and support packages well, and liaise with class teachers about how to use these effective strategies in the wider curriculum.

## **Governance**

- Governors have not been successful in ensuring that the school maintains the good provision identified in the predecessor school. Governors identified, too late after this school opened, that standards had slipped in the provision. However, once they had an accurate understanding of the situation, they acted to address the many issues. They are supporting the headteacher and new leaders to improve the quality of provision.
- Governors visit regularly, and know pupils and staff well. They are passionate about ensuring that pupils achieve well and go on to live independent and successful lives. However, they are not yet challenging leaders sufficiently over the achievement of pupils, most notably over the consistency of assessment and the progress that pupils make from their various starting points.
- Governors have not ensured that the website is compliant with statutory guidance or that it is up to date with the most recent work in the school. Despite routine checks by governors, at the beginning of the inspection a number of policies and documents on the website were still incorrect or out of date, such as the special educational needs policy, curriculum information and the evaluation of the pupil premium spending.
- Governors have not held leaders sufficiently to account over the effectiveness of the additional funding that they receive for disadvantaged pupils. While governors occasionally challenge when they do not have a clear rationale about a particular spending decision, they are not yet ensuring that this money makes a real difference to the achievement of this group of pupils.
- Governors have undertaken thorough work around their statutory responsibilities to oversee the behaviour and safeguarding of pupils, including the provision for children looked after.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

- The single central record of the suitability of staffing meets requirements. Although the Section 128 check was not on the single central record at the beginning of the inspection, this check had been undertaken by leaders and was added to the record while inspectors were on site.
- Staff training is up to date with the most recent statutory guidance, including guidance about how to ensure that pupils are not vulnerable to radicalisation and extremism. Staff use this guidance to make regular and appropriate referrals when they have concerns about pupils.
- Leaders work tenaciously with external agencies over child protection and safeguarding. This includes working closely with families, staff and various services to ensure that pupils who are vulnerable receive effective support. Leaders also work diligently with pastoral teams in the school to ensure that pupils are well monitored, and that pupils' records are maintained meticulously. School systems are constantly reviewed to ensure that pupils are thoroughly safeguarded.
- Leaders ensure that pupils are provided with bespoke support to meet their ever-changing needs and develop their understanding of how to stay safe. Pupils say that they are taught how to stay safe. Most pupils say that they feel safe and are well looked after by staff.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

### **Requires improvement**

- Teachers do not plan consistently well enough to ensure that pupils make rapid academic progress from their various starting points. As a result, teaching, learning and assessment in the school are not yet rigorous in ensuring that pupils make all-round good progress from their various starting points, most notably the most able pupils and those who are ready to achieve more.
- Teachers do not have consistently high enough expectations about what pupils are capable of achieving. Most pupils undertake the same activities in their class, no matter what their starting point. Some pupils receive work that is too easy, or that does not build on their individual prior learning thoroughly enough. On occasions, pupils receive activities that simply fill time rather than provide meaningful learning opportunities.
- Leaders have not ensured that the ongoing academic targets that teachers set for pupils address the needs identified in pupils' education, health and care plans. Teachers are provided with comprehensive 'communication profiles' when pupils first arrive. These profiles identify the major needs and barriers that pupils face when they first arrive at the school. However, leaders do not ensure that teachers' planning builds on these needs so that pupils make rapid progress.
- Where pupils are making better progress, some teachers do identify this and record it well. For example, pupils' City and Guilds folders show a wealth of high-quality information about what they are achieving and how they are developing. However, this is not a common picture across the school. On occasion, some pupils' folders in other subject areas indicate weaker monitoring of their development and achievements over time.

- Pupils' opportunities to make rapid progress in a range of skills is more evident in formal key stage 4 practical qualifications, physical education and in the school's own Pinewood Outdoors programme. In these subjects, pupils are being well supported to develop essential skills, social interaction, cooperative learning, and communication and safety skills. However, assessment in these subjects is either not yet well established or routinely applied by staff.
- Most adults have a good understanding of the development of language, and work hard to develop pupils' confidence to speak and/or communicate effectively. As a result, pupils are confident in lessons to talk out loud and provide answers. Where pupils need more help, teachers use questioning well to check pupils' understanding or develop answers.
- Where teaching, learning and assessment is better, teachers use their expert understanding of individual pupils' needs to plan lessons which build on pupils' prior knowledge. This helps pupils to make rapid progress in their understanding and development. These teachers ensure that the monitoring is also routine and well recorded as evidence of pupils' achievement. In particular, this is stronger in pupils' development of English.

## **Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

**Good**

### **Personal development and welfare**

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Staff know pupils well. Staff use pupils' precise 'communication profiles' and care plans to support pupils' varied needs throughout the day. Staff work with specialist speech and language support, therapists and occupational health specialists to ensure that pupils' care and communication needs are well met. Consequently, pupils develop self-esteem and confidence in their ability to communicate with one another and others in the wider community.
- Pupils are well supported to stay safe. Assemblies and lessons teach pupils routinely about how to undertake activities safely, including the many outdoor opportunities that they pursue. In particular, pupils feel that bullying is not a problem in the school, because adults take pupils' concerns very seriously and deal with issues robustly.
- Most parents are effusive in their praise of the school. They comment on high levels of care and personalised support to build pupils' confidence. They feel that their children are safe.
- Pupils are generally very positive in the praise that they have for the school. They feel that adults genuinely care for them and know them well. Most pupils are happy and confident. In particular, they are positive about how school leaders support them to become independent and achieve high-quality post-16 destinations.

- Attendance is improving because of leaders' support for pupils and their families. Where some pupils have higher rates of absence, many of these are directly linked to very specific medical or social and emotional needs. Absences are carefully monitored by leaders, and links are made quickly with external agencies where families require additional support to get their children to school more regularly.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- During social times, pupils interact with adults and other pupils positively. Pupils wait patiently for their turn at lunchtime, and move around the school calmly and respectfully. Pupils respect and care for the school environment, which is, in the main, welcoming and celebrates pupils' achievements and experiences.
- Pupils generally behave well in lessons because they have positive relationships with one another and with the staff. Pupils generally engage in the activities set by staff, even when these are sometimes too easy for them, or do not interest them fully. This is because they respect the staff and each other, and do not wish to disturb one another.
- Staff have a thorough understanding about the behavioural needs of pupils. They use effective strategies to support pupils when they require greater support to behave appropriately. As a result, leaders' use of fixed-term exclusion, permanent exclusion and physical restraint has reduced over time because staff manage pupils' needs and behaviours well.
- Most pupils develop into confident young people in their time at the school. Pupils' confidence is built, in part, from the numerous opportunities that they get to attend off-site activities. These include visits to the local shops where they learn, in a protected situation, how to use money, travel on public transport and interact with the wider community. As a result, pupils feel that the school is helping them to become more independent.

### Outcomes for pupils

### Requires improvement

- While leaders secure a baseline for pupils on their entry to the school, they do not ensure that they monitor the progress that pupils are making from their starting points regularly enough across all areas of pupils' learning and development. Consequently, leaders do not precisely know the impact that they have on the significant needs that pupils arrive with.
- From their starting points, inspection evidence shows that the progress made by pupils across the school is uneven. Generally, but not always, pupils are making more secure progress in their personal development goals, and in English and communication, but this is not a consistent picture. Where progress is less rapid, this is closely linked to inconsistent use of effective assessment practice to plan learning for pupils.

- The most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, do not make consistently good progress across the curriculum. Too often, pupils are not sufficiently challenged to achieve more when they are capable. Consequently, pupils are not well prepared to achieve well in more challenging qualifications by the time they reach key stage 4.
- Leaders and governors have not routinely checked that the additional funding that they receive is making enough difference to disadvantaged pupils' achievement. Too often, it is spent without thorough evaluation. Consequently, although these pupils are not making less progress than their classmates, leaders and governors do not know if this funding is helping them to catch up with other pupils nationally from similar starting points.
- Literacy and communication are important aspects of the school's provision. The English and literacy coordinator has worked hard to ensure that the right pupils receive additional support with their reading, writing and communication skills. The Year 7 catch-up funding is being used to ensure that pupils receive additional support. Consequently, the positive impact of this intervention is evident in the improvements made to pupils' reading ages, writing skills and in their confidence and communication in the classroom.
- The transition support that staff give to pupils when they are preparing to finish in Year 11 is increasingly effective. Leaders organise events to increase employer and college visits to the school, so that pupils are exposed to the opportunities available to them. Equally, leaders ensure that pupils and parents get support to make applications and opportunities to visit their next-step provision. Consequently, last year, all pupils secured a college place for an appropriate next-step course.



## School details

Unique reference number	141251
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10031427

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	Special
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	157
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Robin Cregan
Headteacher	David McGachen
Telephone number	01920 412 211
Website	<a href="http://www.pinewood.herts.sch.uk">www.pinewood.herts.sch.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:admin@pinewood.herts.sch.uk">admin@pinewood.herts.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- The current headteacher was promoted from deputy headteacher to his current role in September 2016. He had acted as interim headteacher on a temporary basis for a year prior to this. Alongside this promotion, a number of appointments to the senior team were made in September 2016.
- The school provides education for 157 pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school provides support for pupils with moderate learning difficulty; speech, language and communication needs; and autistic spectrum disorder. Admission to the school is through local authority referral.
- All pupils in the provision have either a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan. Pupils enter with attainment that is significantly lower than expected for their age.

- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium funding is above the national average.
- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information, or comply with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish about the admissions arrangements, pupil premium funding, Year 7 catch-up funding and curriculum, or on ensuring that policies are kept up to date, such as the special educational needs policy.
- The school does not use alternative provision currently.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching, learning and assessment across the school. Some of these observations were undertaken jointly with members of the senior leadership team.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders. Inspectors also met with a representative from the local authority, the chair of the governing body and the vice-chair.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work, including work in English, mathematics, science and topic work.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, minutes of governors' meetings, safeguarding records, recruitment paperwork, physical intervention logs, work experience information, pupils' progress information, and school policies and procedures.
- Inspectors took account of 24 parental responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including free-text responses. Inspectors also spoke to some parents as they collected their children from school at the end of the day.
- Inspectors analysed 24 responses from Ofsted's online survey of staff. Additionally, inspectors spoke to staff about their experiences of working at the school.
- There were 27 pupils who completed Ofsted's online survey for pupils. Inspectors also spoke informally to pupils at breaktimes, lunchtimes and in lessons. Inspectors also met formally with pupils to discuss their experiences.

## Inspection team

Kim Pigram, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Tania Perry

Ofsted Inspector

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