

# Inspection of Pinewood School

Hoe Lane, Ware, Hertfordshire SG12 9PB

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Inspection dates: 3 and 4 October 2023

## **Overall effectiveness**

## **Requires improvement**

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The quality of education

**Requires improvement**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Good**

Personal development

**Good**

Leadership and management

**Requires improvement**

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

The headteacher of this school is David McGachen. This school is the single member of Pinewood School Academy Trust. The trust is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Robin Cregan.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils are happy at Pinewood. They are polite and welcoming. They enjoy spending time with each other and make good friendships. At breaktimes, there is lots to do. Pupils have fun on the playground and take part in a wide range of clubs. They appreciate the wide range of experiences that enhance their curriculum, for example regular trips out. They like the 'Pinewood Outdoor' learning, including bushcraft and adventurous activities.

Pupils enjoy their learning in subjects that are planned and delivered well, for example mathematics. Pupils want to learn. They talk enthusiastically about how their teachers help them understand things. They are well behaved in lessons and listen carefully to their teachers.

However, pupils are not taught well enough in all subjects. The school has not given enough consideration to how learning will build year on year. Pupils do not receive a reading curriculum that consistently supports them to learn to read fluently. They do not have enough quality books and stories shared with them to help them develop a love for reading.

## **What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?**

The school has not improved swiftly over time. The areas for improvement at the previous inspection remain. The plans in place for teaching English were removed when classes were reorganised. There are new plans in place, these are not fully developed. Leaders are starting to monitor and check the progress pupils make. Pupils are not receiving a good quality of education. As a result, pupils are not achieving consistently well.

In some subjects, the school has considered how pupils can make progress year on year. In other subjects, it is not clear enough for teachers what pupils should be learning and when. The different departments, (specialist and main school), are not working together enough to ensure that if pupils move from one pathway to another they will continue to make progress.

In English, plans are at an early stage of development. Teachers use short pieces of text, focusing on comprehension. However, this has led to pupils not getting enough experience of reading quality books. When teaching phonics, teachers choose different activities that they think will meet the needs of their pupils. These are not always effective, with not enough direct teaching of phonics knowledge. As a result, some pupils do not learn to read as well as they should. Although the school has appropriate books, most pupils had not been given reading books a month into term. Leaders have not ensured that pupils practise reading. Some teachers build up pupils' understanding of what they read and develop it into purposeful writing. However, this is inconsistent, and some pupils spend too much time on unlinked activities, such as 'weekend news', that do not have specific writing skills or knowledge for pupils to practise.

The school has re-organised classes in line with pupils' needs. This has led to improvements in behaviour and well-being for pupils. However, the current curriculum has not been updated in all areas to reflect the mixed-age classes.

Education, health, and care (EHC) plans are updated appropriately. The use of these in day-to-day practice varies between departments. Where used well, small steps for short term progress are used to adapt individuals' work appropriately and enable them to build on previous learning. This is not consistent though. Sometimes, the work set does not take account of what pupils already know.

Reward systems help motivate pupils to behave well. Regular 'check ins' with pupils about their feelings help them manage their emotions. When pupils are upset or angry, staff help them to calm down using consistent and positive language.

The school has a well-established careers programme. Pupils and parents get appropriate support to plan pupils' next steps at age 16. The personal, social, and health education curriculum is planned and adapted to meet the social understanding of pupils. Pupils talk confidently about how to keep themselves safe online and understand issues, such as consent.

Trustees are aware that progress around curriculum and reading has been far too slow. Trustees' challenge and support in these areas has not been effective in securing improvement. The focus over the last 13 months has been on reorganisation of the school, rather than improving the quality of education and its impact on pupils' achievement.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- Improvements in the quality of education have been too slow. Pupils are not experiencing a good quality of education. The school needs to ensure that improvements are made more rapidly to improve pupils' achievement.
- There is not a consistent approach to teaching phonics. Pupils do not have enough access to high-quality books or those matched to their stage of reading. This means that some pupils are not taught to read well enough. The school needs to ensure that staff are further trained in phonics teaching methods and that these are used effectively.
- The curriculum is not well planned in all subjects. It is not clear how pupils will be able to build new knowledge and skills on what has come before. Some activities are not as valuable as others in helping pupils build up learning. As a result,

pupils are not learning as well as they should. The school needs to ensure that the curriculum is complete, building knowledge and skills over time, both lesson to lesson, and year on year. This curriculum should also ensure that pupils in both the specialist and main classes have the same opportunities and core learning.

- Too often, the activities that teachers provide do not take account of what pupils already know and/or can do. This means that sometimes the work is too easy. The school needs to ensure that staff can use assessment information well, both from before and in lessons, to adapt learning to challenge all pupils.

## How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

## Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	141251
<b>Local authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10288534
<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Academy special converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	211
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair</b>	Robin Cregan
<b>Headteacher</b>	David McGachen
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.pinewood.herts.sch.uk">www.pinewood.herts.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	25 June 2021, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- This school is a single academy trust.
- It provides places for pupils with a range of learning difficulties, including speech, language and communication, and autism spectrum disorder.
- All pupils have an EHC plan.
- The school uses one unregistered alternative provider to provide additional education offsite for a very small number of pupils.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other members of the leadership team. They met with members of staff. They also spoke with trustees and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, science, and personal, social and health education. For each subject, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, looked at pupils' work and spoke with teachers and pupils.
- Inspectors visited a range of other subject lessons and looked at a wide range of curriculum plans.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors considered the 28 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View. They also considered the 21 responses to the Ofsted pupil survey and 41 responses to the Ofsted survey for school staff.

### **Inspection team**

Tessa Holledge, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Sara Boyce

His Majesty's Inspector

Sue Smith

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
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