

# Inspection of a good school: Sauncey Wood Primary School

Pickford Hill, Harpenden, Hertfordshire AL5 5HL

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Inspection dates: 23 and 24 April 2024

## **Outcome**

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

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

The school has undergone significant change this academic year. Some of these changes are new and are happening quickly. A few of these changes are already starting to make a positive difference to pupils' day-to-day experience of school. Other changes will take more time to have the impact that the school intends.

Pupils are polite and welcoming to visitors. They play together well at breaktime and lunchtime. Behaviour in lessons is not always as good as it is outside. At times, it can interrupt pupils' learning. Pupils feel safe at school and know they can speak to any member of staff if they have worries or concerns.

The school has high expectations of what pupils can achieve. However, some weaknesses in the curriculum's design and use of assessment mean that these expectations are not always met. Work is already underway to address some of these shortcomings.

Pupils enjoy coming to school. They value the breadth of opportunities that are available to them. These include trips, visits and a broad offer of well-attended clubs, such as knitting, chess and a range of sports clubs.

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

The curriculum is wide and varied and includes all the subjects in the national curriculum. Pupils appreciate the opportunities they have such as using a well-equipped food room. In some subjects, the school has identified the knowledge and skills that pupils need to be taught. However, in other areas of the curriculum this is not as precisely defined. This makes it difficult for teachers to plan what to teach and when. Consequently, pupils do not always build on what they have learned before. The school has recently started to address this issue, but it is too soon to see if it is making a difference.

Staff and pupils recognise the importance of reading. Recent changes have increased the opportunities for pupils to read in class. The school has tried to prioritise early reading, including adopting a new phonics curriculum last year. However, changes in staffing and a lack of ongoing training have limited the school's progress in making sure this is always taught well enough because some staff have not had the training needed to deliver the phonics programme well.

In many subjects, teachers break down complex ideas and processes into small steps and give pupils the guidance they need to understand them. Teachers check pupils' understanding in lessons effectively. They make sure pupils are ready to move on to new subject content or more complex ideas. However, teachers are less successful at checking what pupils have remembered over time well. This is because tests do not always closely link to what pupils have been taught. This makes it difficult for the school to identify how well pupils are progressing through the curriculum.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported well. Pupils, families and teachers are fully involved in decisions about the help pupils with SEND need. This enables teachers to help pupils with SEND learn the curriculum effectively.

The school has introduced a new behaviour policy this year. However, it is not being followed by all teachers consistently. This means that when disruption to learning occurs, teachers do not always manage it well. The school tracks behaviour incidents and attendance over time. However, this information is not used effectively to identify trends or evaluate the impact of the schools' actions to improve these areas.

The school has a well-designed programme to cater for pupils' wider personal development. There is a strong link between what pupils learn in the curriculum and the trips, visits and other opportunities that the school has selected to enhance pupils' learning. For example, through the curriculum, pupils learn how to develop healthy relationships and lead a healthy lifestyle. This helps them make the right choices and to influence others positively.

Recent changes in leadership have left staff feeling unsettled. Weaknesses in the curriculum and the approach to behaviour have added to staff workload. New leaders have quickly identified and planned for the necessary improvements at the school. Staff are positive about recent changes. Historically, the governing body have not had all the information they need to fully understand the school's strengths and weaknesses. This has limited the challenge and support they offer the school.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The school ensures that safeguarding is a priority and responds to safeguarding concerns swiftly and appropriately. However, the school does not consistently record the actions taken to safeguard pupils. This makes it difficult to review when actions were taken and determine why and how this might inform future decisions.

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

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

- In some subjects, the school has not precisely identified the knowledge that pupils need to learn. This makes it difficult for teachers to know what to teach and how to assess what pupils have learned. This information is not used well to inform future planning. This means that pupils do not always build on prior knowledge effectively. The school should ensure the curriculum is reviewed to identify the knowledge and skills that pupils should learn in all subjects and that assessment is used effectively to inform curriculum planning.
- Not all staff have had the training needed to teach the school's chosen phonics programme well. This leads to inconsistencies in how effectively phonics is taught. This prevents some pupils learning to read as well as they should. The school should ensure that all staff have the expertise they need to teach phonics well.
- Teachers do not always have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and do not implement the recently introduced behaviour policy consistently. This means that the poor behaviour of some pupils is not always managed effectively. This disrupts the learning of others. The school should ensure its expectations of behaviour are understood by all staff and ensure that staff apply the behaviour policy consistently.
- Safeguarding is effective. However, the school does not have consistent processes for recording safeguarding concerns and the actions taken in addressing them. This makes it difficult for the school to understand when decisions have been made and why. The school should review and improve its procedures for recording safeguarding concerns and the follow up actions it takes.
- Leaders and governors do not have established systems and processes to give them all the information they need to evaluate the impact of their work. For example, strategies to improve attendance and behaviour. As a result, leaders and governors lack the information to further their work in these areas. The school should ensure systems and processes to enable leaders and governors to evaluate fully the effectiveness of their actions.

## Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in March 2014

## How can I feed back my views?

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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>	117102
<b>Local authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10318583
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	192
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Michelle Saas and Colin Noakes
<b>Headteacher</b>	Eileen Anderson
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.sauceywood.herts.sch.uk">www.sauceywood.herts.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	19 June 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The interim headteacher took up post in April 2024.
- A substantive headteacher has been appointed for September 2024.
- The school uses one registered alternative provider.
- The school has a specialist resource base for pupils with speech, language and communication needs and for pupils with autism.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, senior leaders and governors, including the co-chair of the local governing body.

- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and art and design. For each deep dive, the inspector held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector also looked at curriculum plans from some other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: 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.

### **Inspection team**

Marc White, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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