

Senacre Wood Primary School

Graveney Road, Maidstone, Kent ME15 8QQ

Inspection dates	13–14 January 2016
Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Senacre Wood pupils are a credit to the school. They are polite, friendly and caring and enjoy coming to school.
- Pupils, staff, parents and governors are rightly proud of their school and its happy, family atmosphere.
- Leaders, including governors, have taken successful action to ensure that the school has improved since the previous inspection. They have ensured that the good quality of teaching has been sustained despite many staff changes. Pupils make good progress and now achieve well.
- Teaching is good. Teachers plan lessons that motivate and engage pupils well. There are good, trusting relationships between pupils and staff.
- Pupils' behaviour is good in lessons, around the school and in the playground. They feel safe and well looked after in school.
- Pupils have good attitudes to learning and want to do well.
- There is a strong team spirit in the school, staff morale is high and there is a shared determination to forge further improvements.
- Children get a good start to school in the early years. They make good progress and are ready for continuing their learning in Year 1.
- Parents are very positive about the school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Achievement in mathematics is not as strong as it is in reading and writing.
- This is because children in the early years do not always have sufficient opportunity to practise their mathematical skills in order to catch up quickly from their low starting points. Older pupils are not always taught the skills to explain their thinking and reasoning or develop a deeper mathematical understanding.
- Foundation subject leaders do not yet have sufficient impact on improving the quality of teaching and learning.
- The most-able pupils are not always sufficiently challenged in all classes to make the rapid progress of which they are capable because expectations are not always high enough.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement in mathematics across the school by:
 - providing children with more opportunities to practise and secure their mathematical skills in the early years so that they catch up more quickly from their starting points
 - ensuring that pupils make more rapid progress through using a wider use of a range of practical resources and meaningful, relevant activities to promote their ability to explain their learning and increase their depth of understanding.

- Increase the progress made by the most-able pupils by:
 - providing work which more effectively matches their needs and challenges them to make as much progress as possible
 - raising teachers' expectations of the amount of work these pupils can achieve in the time available.

- Strengthen the role of foundation subject leaders so they have a greater impact on further improving the quality of teaching and learning.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Senior leaders and governors have made significant and successful improvements since the previous inspection. Their work has ensured that, despite many recent changes in staffing, teaching remains good and pupils' outcomes have improved so that many are generally making faster progress from their starting points.
- The headteacher, deputy headteacher, staff and governors share the ambition and determination to provide the best for the pupils and to build further upon the strengths and improvements.
- The headteacher and deputy have the confidence and support of parents and staff. There is strong teamwork throughout the school. Staff morale is high and teachers respond well to the many opportunities to develop their skills through a range of training. This helps them to meet identified school priorities and develop individual skills. Teachers who are at the beginning of their careers commented very positively on the quality and range of support they receive from leaders to enhance their teaching skills.
- Almost all of the staff who responded to the questionnaire made comments about the caring, friendly and supportive nature of the school. One wrote, 'The school is like another family,' and another, 'The school has a friendly, caring atmosphere and I find coming to work very rewarding.'
- The school's own checks on its performance in all areas of its work are accurate and provide a clear direction for further improvement. There is a shared understanding of the strengths of the school and the priorities for further development.
- Leaders check on the quality of teaching, look at pupils' work and discuss each pupil's progress over time. If any weaknesses are identified, in either teaching or pupils' progress, appropriate support is given.
- English and mathematics subject leaders have a positive impact on the development of their subjects, with clear targets for improvement. Some other subject leaders are very new to their roles and experienced leaders are supporting their work. Senior leaders have correctly identified that the role of leaders of the foundation subjects is not yet developed enough to enable them to have an impact on the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced, with an appropriate focus given to literacy and numeracy. Leaders are correctly keeping the curriculum under constant review and have already ensured that there are opportunities for pupils to use their writing and mathematical skills in other subjects. This has already had a positive impact as shown in pupils' improved writing skills. Leaders have identified actions to strengthen this approach to more effectively link learning across a range of subjects. Pupils in Year 5 and 6 said it was fun and challenging to learn Mandarin and those in Year 3 and Year 4 are getting a good grasp of basic French.
- The curriculum is enriched with a range of visits and visitors and lunchtime and after-school clubs which pupils say they enjoy and which help to develop their personal as well as their academic skills.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well and underpins all that the school does. Pupils are effectively prepared for life in modern Britain because staff and pupils promote fundamental British values in all that they do. A culture of respect and tolerance is fostered through the school's values, assemblies and the curriculum. Pupils learn about and celebrate different religions and cultures.
- There is a strong commitment to equal opportunities and leaders check on the progress of all groups including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs and disadvantaged pupils. Additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is used effectively to ensure that eligible pupils make good progress from their starting points. Their progress is tracked carefully and any additional support they receive is monitored to make sure it is making a difference. As a result, gaps between these pupils and other pupils nationally are closing.
- Leaders have correctly identified that some of the most-able pupils do not make the more rapid progress of which they are capable to ensure that they achieve better outcomes over time.
- All staff ensure that pupils learn without any type of discrimination and that any language or actions that may cause offence are not acceptable.
- The school makes good use of the primary physical education and sport funding. It is spent in a range of ways which enhances the existing provision. These include employing sport specialists and coaches who work with pupils and teachers to enhance skills and improve outcomes for pupils. There is an increased

participation in a wider variety of sports, for example, fencing, handball and tri-golf as well as additional football opportunities and participation in competitive sports tournaments.

- The local authority provides helpful and productive support to the school. For example, advisers have supported in the early years, provided training on assessment and worked with the governing body.
- Parents are positive about the school. Several parents commented on the improved communication between home and school and how happy their children are to attend. One parent who wrote, 'If we had to choose a school again, we would still choose Senacre Wood' summed up their positive views.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The governing body is well informed by the headteacher and their own monitoring work.
 - Governors understand the quality of teaching and learning and are involved in decisions relating to teachers' promotion and pay increases.
 - They ensure that pupil premium funding is used effectively by rigorously monitoring the impact on outcomes for pupils to ensure that it is making a difference.
 - Governors provide effective support and challenge to leaders to ensure that the school continues to improve.
 - The governing body does not monitor the primary physical education and sport funding or its impact in the same depth that it does the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders ensure that all staff and governors receive up-to-date training and that all requirements are fully met to keep pupils safe and secure.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- As a result of good teaching, pupils' outcomes are good and have improved since the previous inspection. Teachers are enthusiastic and committed to providing the best for pupils. They are keen to learn and improve.
- Teachers plan and organise lessons carefully to motivate pupils' learning. Pupils learn in a calm, hard-working atmosphere. There are good relationships between pupils and between pupils and teachers. As a result, pupils have good attitudes to learning, want to do their best and feel confident to take risks, as they know their attempts will be valued. One parent wrote, 'The teachers are amazing, they always make time to listen and make the lessons really engaging and interesting.'
- Teachers use the school's assessment policy for marking and feedback consistently. This is an improvement in their practice since the previous inspection, particularly in marking writing. In most cases they give pupils time to respond to their comments and check for any misconceptions so that errors are not repeated. Pupils say that teachers' comments help them know how to improve their work and move their learning forward.
- Teachers make good use of technology and displays around the class to support teaching and learning.
- Teamwork between teachers and teaching assistants is strong. Teaching assistants generally contribute well to pupils' learning. They are well trained and know how to help pupils with additional support, particularly those who may be struggling. Teachers and teaching assistants question pupils well to extend pupils' thinking, understanding and depth of learning. Questions and pupils' responses help teachers check on learning and pick up any misunderstandings, which helps pupils to make good progress.
- Teaching places appropriate emphasis on developing pupils' skills in reading, writing and mathematics with increasing opportunities for pupils to develop these skills when working in other subjects.
- Teachers generally have high expectations for pupils and challenge them accordingly. For example, pupils in Year 6 were challenged to demonstrate a high level of reasoning when working with improper fractions. In Year 3, the most-able pupils were challenged appropriately in estimating and calculating addition problems. Sometimes, however, insufficient demands are made on the most-able pupils in all classes to enable them to make the progress of which they are capable.
- Leaders have worked with determination to take successful action to improve the teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds that they make), which was an area for improvement noted in the previous inspection. The positive impact of their work is evident in the improved results in the Year 1 phonics check over the past two years. Reading for enjoyment is promoted well across the school and teachers frequently use good-quality, motivating texts as starting points for topic work as seen, for example, in the Year 6 study of the First World War.
- Teachers and teaching assistants use assessment information increasingly well to ensure that learning

builds on pupils' individual needs. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are supported well. They are fully engaged in learning and their various needs are well met.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- All staff know the pupils well and so any specific care and welfare needs are well met in classes and in the playground.
- Pupils enjoy school and thrive in a happy, caring environment. Attendance has improved and is average.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school and all parents who responded to the online questionnaire agree that their children feel safe and are happy at school. Pupils are aware of the need to be safe when using the internet and social media.
- Pupils are polite, caring, friendly and respectful of adults and each other. They are keen to share their views about school and learning and are very positive about all their experiences at school.
- Pupils develop as well-rounded individuals who are increasingly independent, resilient and keen to help each other out at work and play.
- Pupils have a good awareness that there are different types of bullying. They say with great confidence that if any bullying did occur in school, it would be sorted out and stopped straight away by staff. There are trusting relationships with staff and pupils said they could always talk to someone in school if they had any worries or concerns.
- The breakfast club provides a safe and social start to the day and has helped to improve significantly the attendance of some pupils alongside the support for pupils and their families from the family liaison officer.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are courteous and considerate to visitors to the school and respond promptly to staff requests. They conduct themselves well in lessons, and show responsible attitudes during social times, in assemblies, at lunchtime and in the playground.
- School records confirm that behaviour is good over time and show that incidents of unacceptable behaviour from a few pupils have decreased as a result of the action the school has taken to support and promote good behaviour.
- Pupils understand and appreciate the 'good to be green' behaviour policy, which is consistently applied across the school.
- Most parents agree that the school ensures that pupils are well behaved. One parent commented, 'I like the way behaviour is monitored and that the headteacher and teachers know all the children by name.'
- Very occasionally, when pupils' interest is not sustained in lessons, some can become quietly distracted and lose their focus on learning, which is why behaviour is not yet outstanding.

Outcomes for pupils good

- Since the previous inspection, outcomes for pupils have improved. The work of pupils currently in the school and the school's checks on progress show that pupils in all year groups are generally making increasingly good and improving progress from their starting points in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils spoke enthusiastically about their learning in other subjects including sport and the arts and the topics which link learning across different subjects.
- In 2015, the proportions of pupils who made the expected progress by the end of Year 6 was broadly in line with the national figure in reading, writing and mathematics. This is taking into account the fact that one pupil represented 3.3% of the year group. The proportion making more than expected progress was slightly higher than national in reading, broadly in line in writing but below the national figure in mathematics.
- In 2015, pupils' attainment by the end of Year 6 was broadly in line with the national figures overall. It was strongest in writing, showing the biggest improvement from the previous year, and weakest in

mathematics. By the end of Year 2, attainment was in line with that found nationally in reading, writing and mathematics.

- At the end of Year 2 and Year 6, compared to national figures, too few pupils reached the higher levels, particularly in mathematics. Pupils sometimes struggle to explain their thinking and reasoning in mathematics. They can do this well when they have opportunities to use a range of resources, particularly to help them in problem-solving activities and when activities are relevant and meaningful. These opportunities, however, are not consistently provided in all classes.
- Currently, the most-able pupils are generally challenged to achieve well and make good progress. Leaders are aware, however, that this is not yet at the same quality or effectiveness in all classes.
- In 2015, the proportion of pupils who reached the required level in the Year 1 phonics check was in line with the national figure and a marked improvement from 2013. Pupils use phonics skills well to read unfamiliar words and to help with their writing.
- As pupils progress they develop and use a range of strategies to help them read. They say they have lots of opportunities to read during the school day and younger readers read regularly to adults. Older pupils, when reading aloud, correct themselves when they know they have made an error, which means they are reading well to make sense of the text. Pupils of all abilities expressed a love of reading and could talk about different authors and styles of writing. They work in small groups to develop skills of inference and deduction to help their depth of understanding of a range of texts.
- The attainment of disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 in 2015 was below that of other pupils nationally and others in the school in reading, writing and mathematics. Leaders have focused carefully on outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and monitored the impact of any additional support they receive. As a consequence they are making increasingly good progress, as are others in the school. Although gaps in their attainment remain, they are narrowing.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs generally make similar progress to others over time. Additional support in lessons, in small groups or individually is well planned and effective.

Early years provision

is good

- Children start in the early years with skills and knowledge that are often below those typical for their age, particularly in their mathematical skills.
- Through a good balance of well-planned activities led by the teacher and those where children choose for themselves, they make good progress throughout their time in the Reception class and catch up quickly. They are effectively prepared to continue their learning in Year 1.
- For the past three years the proportion of children who have reached a good level of development has steadily improved and has been at or above that found nationally.
- Effective leadership of the early years ensures that children learn well in a stimulating environment. The classroom is bright and attractive and is welcoming and friendly. This helps children to settle happily and calmly into the routines of the day.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good. Staff have a good understanding of the needs of young children. Good leadership ensures that assessments are used well to plan the next steps for children's learning.
- The outdoor area has been developed well to provide good learning opportunities for children. It was seen to be particularly effective in promoting children's mathematical language and skills. The mathematics area in the classroom does not always promote such effective learning. The expectations for what children could do and learn from the activities are less clearly defined. As a result, there are fewer opportunities for children to practise and secure their skills and catch up more rapidly from their starting points.
- Children enjoy learning. They learn phonics well to help them read and write and show they can use their phonics knowledge in different situations. For example, when they discussed with their 'talk partner' what they were going to do, one child said, 'I'm doing pink play dough – P!'
- They behave well and learn to share equipment and cooperate with each other at work and at play. They respond quickly to instructions and learn how to keep themselves safe. Welfare requirements are met well and children are kept safe and secure indoors and outdoors.
- All groups, including disadvantaged children and disabled children and those who have special educational needs make similar good progress, as adults provide good support to any child whose circumstances may make them vulnerable.

School details

Unique reference number	118526
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10006553

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	206
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andy Bax
Headteacher/Principal/Teacher in charge	Peter Hellman
Telephone number	01622 759864
Website	senacre-wood.kent.sch.uk
Email address	office@senacre-wood.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	5–6 November 2013

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are supported by the pupil premium is above average. The pupil premium is additional government funding for those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The deputy headteacher joined the school in September 2015.
- The school provides a daily breakfast club.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 12 lessons. They talked to pupils about their work and looked at the work in pupils' books. Inspectors observed pupils at playtime and lunchtime and asked them for their views on the school. Inspectors also heard some pupils read.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and other staff with key leadership responsibilities.
- Discussions were held with governors and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of documents including: the school's own check on its performance and the quality of teaching; the school improvement plan; information on pupils' progress; and records relating to attendance, behaviour and safeguarding.
- Inspectors looked at the 49 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, including 17 written comments, and an inspector spoke to some parents at the start of the school day. Inspectors also took account of 25 questionnaires returned by staff.

Inspection team

Margaret Coussins, lead inspector

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