

Inspection of Pinewood School

Hoe Lane, Ware, Hertfordshire SG12 9PB

Inspection dates: 26–27 September 2019

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pinewood is a school where all pupils feel safe and happy because they all get on well and help each other. Pupils know that they can be themselves and so they accept others for what they are. As a result, everyone treats each other with kindness and respect. There are positive relationships between adults and pupils.

Pupils and staff told us that there was no bullying in the school and parents generally agree with them. Pupils know that they can always talk to an adult who will help them if they are upset or worrying about something.

Teachers expect the pupils to work hard and do their very best. They make lessons interesting and fun so that the pupils will enjoy their learning. However, there are some teachers who give pupils work that is either too easy or too difficult to do. Leaders have not yet rectified this problem.

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

The quality of education requires improvement. Some teachers lack the training they needed about the strategies and resources they could use to meet the wide range of needs that the pupils have. Many of the courses that pupils follow help them to gain entry level qualifications. This is appropriate for some pupils but for others these courses do not meet their needs.

The way mathematics is being taught does not always meet the specific needs of pupils. This means that pupils cannot build on what they already know. This is not the case for the most able pupils who follow entry level and GCSE courses.

Although teachers know how to teach pupils to read, some pupils do not understand what they have read. They have not gained the functional skills necessary to read fluently.

Curriculum plans for personal, social and health education (PSHE) have a clear structure. Pupils build on previous knowledge and revisit areas to reinforce learning successfully. The PE curriculum also makes sure that pupils gain the essential skills they need to be able to take part in a wide variety of sports.

The personal and social development of the pupils and their behaviour are both good. The headteacher and senior leaders have a very clear strategic vision. They want the pupils leaving Pinewood to be as independent as possible in adult life. Teachers share this view and everything they teach has this aim as the major focus.

The Pinewood Citizens Charter helps pupils to understand what it means to be a good citizen in the school. During an assembly on climate change and global warming, pupils were confident to share their ideas and were making links to learning within their classroom and to their own experiences.

A strength of the school is the outdoor education programme, which promotes problem-solving, team-building and life skills in preparation for adulthood.

Leadership requires improvement. Leaders have not made sure that all teachers can teach the curriculum effectively. Too much emphasis is placed on gaining entry level qualifications that are not appropriate for some of the pupils. This means that the lower-ability groups are not prepared well enough for the next stage in their education. Governors have not challenged the leaders about this because their focus has not been on curriculum development.

Governors are supportive of the work of the school and meet all their statutory requirements. However, governors spend too much time on operational aspects and neglect the strategic direction of the school. It appears that governors do not fully understand the importance of managing staff workload.

There have been improvements in leadership since the last inspection. The faculty leaders know what needs to be done to improve their curriculum areas but have not had time to fully implement the changes. Staff morale is high and teachers feel well supported. Teachers told us that leaders had begun to take steps to reduce unnecessary workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders work closely with external agencies, parents and various services. They make sure that pupils who are vulnerable receive effective support. Thorough systems are in place for checking on the suitability and recruitment of staff. The child protection policy is updated annually. Staff are clear about what actions they need to take if they have concerns about a child or a member of staff. Staff have been trained on the most recent statutory guidance. However, at the time of the inspection, leaders had not made a record of who has completed this training.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some teachers are not adequately trained to teach all the areas of the curriculum required of them. Leaders need to make sure that teachers are fully trained to teach the wider range of subjects that they are now expected to deliver.
- Leaders need to review the suitability of the accreditation they offer so that it is more relevant and meaningful to the lower-ability pupils. These pupils need to follow programmes of study that will help them to apply the skills they have learned in a variety of different contexts.
- Governors need to focus more on their strategic responsibility for setting the vision and direction of the school.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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.

If you're not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

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

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	141251
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10110215
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	172
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Robin Cregan
Headteacher	David McGachen
Website	www.pinewood.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	17–18 May 2017

Information about this school

- The school provides education for 172 pupils aged 11 to 16 who have special education needs and/or disabilities. The school provides support for pupils with moderate learning difficulty, speech, language and communication needs, autistic spectrum disorder and complex needs. Admission to the school is through local authority referral.
- All pupils in the provision have an education, health and care plan. Pupils enter with attainment that is significantly below that 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 use alternative provision.
- The school is in a rural location and makes the best possible use of the school grounds through their exemplary outdoor education programme.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- We met with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders and four groups of

teachers who teach a range of subjects. Discussions were also held with the chair of the governing body and one other governor. An inspector had a telephone conversation with a local authority representative. Meetings were also held with the designated lead for safeguarding, the member of staff who maintains the single central record and the family support worker. We reviewed a range of policies and other documents. We also considered the views of staff and parents who completed the online questionnaires.

- We considered literacy and communication, mathematics, personal, social and health education (PSHE) and physical education in depth during this inspection. This included discussions with senior leaders, subject leaders, teachers, lesson visits, talking to groups of pupils and a work scrutiny of pupils' work.

Inspection team

Lynda Walker, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Jackie Mullan	Ofsted Inspector
Pauline MacMillan	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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