



SCHOOL INSPECTION SERVICE

INSPECTION REPORT FOR AKELEY WOOD JUNIOR SCHOOL

DfE No: 928/6045

The key inspection judgements for this school are:

The quality of education	Good	2
Pupils' personal development	Good	2
Safeguarding pupils' welfare health and safety	Good	2
Leadership, management and governance	Requires Improvement	3
Effectiveness of the Early Years' provision	Good	2

Compliance with the Independent School Standards:

The school meets the regulatory requirements of schedule 1 of The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Compliance with the Equality Act 2010:

The school meets the requirements of the Equality Act.

Compliance with the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage:

The school meets the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Date of inspection: 26-28 April 2016

SECTION A: SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

Akeley Wood Junior School provides a good education for its pupils. The quality of education is good as are pupils' learning and achievement. Teaching is good and helps pupils to learn and achieve well, but there are inconsistencies in quality which need to be rectified in some areas, for example the clarity of some teachers' explanations to pupils. In some classes pupils' ability to write at length and for a variety reasons is not well enough developed and some teachers do not have high enough expectations for the presentation of pupils' work and for their handwriting. Pupils' work is marked regularly, the best marking tells pupils how to improve, less successful marking tells them what they have achieved and does not identify or eradicate errors in basic skills or challenge some pupils well enough. Assessment and the curriculum are good. The school's provision for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and those with English as an additional language (EAL) is outstanding. The pupils behave well. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good as is their personal development. The school's provision for promoting the welfare, health and safety of its pupils is good. The leadership and management of the school requires improvement because the school has relied too much on external audits of its work and has not been sufficiently proactive in identifying and assessing risk. While most parents are supportive of the school, a minority of parents are concerned about the school's provision for managing challenging behaviour and they state that they do not always feel comfortable discussing their concerns with the school. School leaders have not resolved these concerns or explained fully the reasons for changes to teaching and the curriculum. The Early Years Foundation Stage is generally good, but at present requires some specific intervention to ensure that all children behave well and receive an equally high quality of teaching.

Whilst not required by the regulations, the proprietor should:

- raise standards of writing by introducing school-wide policies for handwriting, marking and extended writing;
- ensure that all teaching is as good as the best by providing additional training for some staff;
- improve communication with parents; and
- improve the rigour of risk assessments.

SECTION B: INFORMATION

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION:

This inspection was carried out by the School Inspection Service (SIS) in accordance with Section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. It follows the inspection framework agreed by SIS and the Department for Education (DfE).

In reaching their judgements, the inspectors observed lessons throughout the school in a range of subjects. They examined samples of pupils' work. They observed the life of the school including at break and lunchtimes. They examined the school's documentation, records and website. They held discussions with pupils, staff and governors. They took account of the views of parents and pupils. The inspectors were:

Reporting Inspector:	Mrs Christine Graham
Team inspectors:	Mr David Rzeznik Dr Martin Bradley

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL:

Akeley Wood Junior School is a non-selective, co-educational day school for pupils aged 12 months to 11 years. It is situated in a rural area of Buckinghamshire. Pupils are grouped by ability in English and mathematics. The school aims to help every child meet and exceed their goals and unlock their true potential by providing the perfect balance between an excellent education, uncompromising pastoral care and the development of each child's individual qualities in a safe and stimulating environment.

Akeley Wood Nursery, which is a separately registered early years' setting for the youngest children, was inspected at the same time. A separate report about this setting is published on the SIS website.

SECTION C: THE INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

1. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is good.

Pupils' learning and achievement

Pupils' learning and achievement are good. Their education gets off to a good start in Years 1 and 2. There is effective transition from the early years of school and any weaknesses in their learning, for example in their understanding of letters and sounds, are identified and steps are taken to bring about improvement. In Year 1 pupils benefit from exciting and interesting tasks which are very well matched to their needs. They make outstanding progress and enjoy learning. Pupils continue to make progress in Year 2 although in some subjects this is good rather than outstanding because too much time is wasted in explanations so pupils do not move onto their own tasks swiftly enough. By the end of Year 2 pupils' achievement is at least in line with and usually above that expected nationally. Pupils continue to make progress as they move through the school and this is facilitated by the school's arrangements for grouping pupils by ability in English and mathematics lessons. This allows pupils to learn at their own pace, although the school continues to have high expectations for the achievement of all pupils. Pupils enjoy being in sets. They recognise that they gain a great deal from being taught with pupils of similar ability and they feel, rightly, that this helps them to make good progress. By the end of Year 6 the most able pupils achieve well reaching standards which are above those expected nationally. All pupils make at least expected and often better than expected progress from their individual starting points but their progress in writing is not yet as good as in the other core subjects because in some classes they have too few opportunities to write at length and apply their knowledge of spelling, punctuation and grammar. When these opportunities are available, pupils from Year 1 onwards are able to produce well organised and structured writing with accurate use of punctuation. Pupils' use of descriptive and technical language is well developed and their speaking and listening skills are excellent because group work and discussion are a strong feature of the school. The progress made by pupils identified as having SEND, EAL or those who need a little more support with learning is good and sometimes outstanding because the school has very effective systems to assess their needs and check their progress.

The quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is good. It meets all the regulatory requirements and the school's aims. It is based on the latest version of the National Curriculum with some adaptations and it includes modern foreign languages, games, drama and food technology. The school has recently introduced a Forest School and pupils of all ages enjoy outdoor learning. There is an effective curriculum statement which is well supported by the school's policies, plans and resources. The curriculum is cohesive and plans successfully for progression between each year group. It takes account of the transition between the Early Years and main school and it prepares pupils well for the next stage in their education. The school's provision for pupils with SEND and EAL is outstanding because the curriculum is well adapted to their needs. There is a very good range of clubs and activities which

are much appreciated by pupils and their parents: many of these take place after school. There are day and residential visits which are carefully planned to match the taught curriculum or to extend pupils' personal development. Sport is an important feature of the curriculum. Opportunities to participate in competitive sports and represent the school motivate pupils and add to their enjoyment of school and promote their self-confidence. These opportunities are open to players of all skill levels because the school plays in a number of leagues. Pupils talk with pride about their achievements and that of their team.

The quality of teaching and assessment

The quality of teaching and assessment is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge. They use information from assessment well to plan work which meets the needs of pupils so they all make progress from their individual starting points. Teachers share the purpose of the lesson with pupils and they ensure that pupils know when they have been successful. In the most effective lessons the pace of teaching is brisk and there is a tangible sense of purpose. Teachers provide pupils with short clear explanations and they maximise opportunities for pupils to work on their individual tasks. Teachers provide very effective guidance for pupils by asking them well targeted questions and encouraging them to assess their work and improve it, this helps them to master new concepts and skills and to improve weaker areas. In these lessons teachers have high expectations for all aspects of pupils' work. They demand excellent presentation and handwriting and they ensure that weaknesses in the basic skills are identified and eradicated. Younger pupils are given tactful guidance which helps them to focus on the teacher and minimises distractions. Praise is used well to motivate pupils. In a small number of lessons teaching requires improvement because teachers talk to pupils for too long. Their explanations lack focus and valuable teaching time is wasted by unnecessary repetition of explanations. These lessons are not well managed and pupils spend too much time waiting for a task to begin. One pupil said that he was often confused about what he had to do because the teacher provided too much explanation.

Assessment is effective. In September 2015 the school introduced a system of externally validated assessments to check pupils' achievement. The system allows the school to assess pupils' achievement on entry to the school. There are regular assessments throughout the year and teachers keep detailed records of pupils' progress. Any lack of progress is identified immediately and a range of interventions are put in place to help the child to catch up. The assessments are matched to the latest version of the National Curriculum and the data collected and work seen in pupils' books shows that pupils make good and sometimes outstanding progress from their individual starting points. The assessments show teachers which aspects of learning have been mastered and need not be repeated and where further consolidation is needed. This helps teachers to plan learning tasks which match individual pupils' needs. Pupils understand the assessment system and can explain which stage or sub-stage they have reached. Their books are marked regularly. The best marking tells pupils how to improve; less effective marking simply tells them what they have achieved. Pupils particularly like the one to one guidance and dialogue with staff that they receive during lessons when teachers work with them to improve their work.

2. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

Pupils' personal development is good. The school's provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils are happy, courteous and friendly. They enjoy school a great deal as shown in their positive attitudes to learning and their regular attendance. The school turns out well-rounded, caring individuals who are keen to learn. Pupils are well behaved and they are very respectful to their teachers, each other and visitors. A minority of parents think that the challenging behaviour of a few pupils is not managed well. Inspectors, and the pupils spoken to about this concern, think that those with behaviour difficulties are managed effectively. However, school leaders do not always communicate well enough to parents how misbehaviour is dealt with. Pupils say bullying is rare and that they are free from harassment and intimidation. School records back up this view. Effective e-safety procedures are adopted and pupils are kept safe when online.

Excellent work is being done to promote British values, such as tolerance, respect, democracy and the rule of law. Pupils are actively encouraged to explore what these values and terms mean to them. For example, pupils put their thoughts about the terms on a display board for all to see. One Year 2 pupil wrote. 'Laws are important for freedom'. Such insight indicates values are being learned and terms understood by the youngest pupils in school. The recent visit by the Speaker of the House of Commons, enabled pupils to gain an insight into the working of Parliament, civic duties and politicians' responsibilities.

Teachers and teaching assistants are very good at praising pupils' efforts and encouraging them to succeed. This helps to boost their self-confidence and self-esteem. There are a wealth of social experiences, such as residential activities, assemblies and school productions that enhance pupils' personal development. There is a school council and pupils' views are sought and valued. Pupils have made a difference by raising money for good causes, improving the school menu and play equipment. They are involved in raising funds for a local food bank and they help pack food for distribution. The school supports a community in Sri Lanka, for example, to help under-privileged women. Both initiatives help pupils develop a sense of empathy and compassion for the needs of others less fortunate than themselves. There are lots of opportunities for pupils to exercise responsibility and leadership as part of their roles as play leaders and house captains.

Pupils are developing an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures. However, their understanding of religious diversity is underdeveloped. Pupils' understanding of discriminatory practices, particularly those associated with gender and sexual orientation are not well enough developed. The school has recognised this and is currently consulting with parents about the content of a new policy covering these issues.

3. SAFEGUARDING PUPILS' WELFARE, HEALTH AND SAFETY

The school's provision for welfare, health and safety is good. The child protection policy is up to date; it is reviewed annually and reflects the latest government guidance. All staff, including the designated persons responsible for child protection, have been suitably trained to fulfil their child protection responsibilities. The designated persons are knowledgeable and they ensure child protection procedures are implemented effectively. They liaise effectively with a number of local authorities and ensure that any referrals made to local safeguarding officers are well managed. The school takes seriously its responsibility to promote British values and to prevent extremism and radicalisation. The vast majority of staff have undergone Channel and Prevent training to ensure that they have a good understanding of government requirements to protect children from harm. Fire safety is well managed. Suitable fire risk assessments are carried out every two years. Recommendations arising from fire safety checks are addressed promptly. There are regular fire drills, and fire alarms and emergency lighting are regularly tested to ensure that equipment is in good working order. First aid procedures, including the administration of medicines, are clear and are implemented effectively. Children with medical conditions are identified and staff know who they are so that they receive appropriate treatment and medication. Accidents are suitably recorded. The very good staff to pupil ratio means that pupils are well supervised at all times. Appropriate health and safety procedures are in place. Sound risk assessments are carried out for trips and visits off-site. Risk assessments of the premises are not always sufficiently robust. However, when external agencies identify shortcomings in health and safety practices, the headteacher acts quickly to remedy them. The attendance and admission registers are maintained in accordance with the regulations.

Suitable anti-bullying and behaviour policies are in place and they are implemented effectively. There have been no fixed term or permanent exclusions in the recent past. Appropriate records are kept of any incidents of misbehaviour, including bullying and racism, and the sanctions that were imposed. E-safety procedures are robust. Parents receive information about how they can keep their child safe online.

All of the required vetting checks are carried out to confirm the suitability of staff and others to work with children. The single central register contains all of the required information, however, the further checks needed on those who have lived outside the United Kingdom are not always completed promptly enough. Some risk assessments that are undertaken, pending the outcome of overseas checks, require further improvement. The headteacher has been trained in safer recruitment and is involved in all staff appointments.

4. LEADERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

Leadership and management require improvement. The school has effective procedures to check on the quality of education and pupils' progress but these do not extend to identifying risk within the school site. School leaders have relied too heavily on reports from external agencies, to which they respond very promptly, but have not established robust internal procedures. There is effective leadership of the quality of teaching at all levels, including that of the Year Heads,

and some parents commented on this very favourably. There are some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching in the school. School leaders are aware of this and are taking action to bring about improvement, which includes further training and support. Plans to improve the education the school provides are robust and correctly identify the school's priorities. Senior staff monitor the effectiveness of new initiatives and the impact of teachers' work by checking on pupils' progress and looking at pupils' work and the quality of teaching during lessons. The leadership of SEND and assessment and tracking is outstanding and this has made a significant difference to the progress made by all pupils in the school. .

The school meets the Independent School Standards for premises and accommodation, information to parents and handling complaints. Most parents were happy with all that the school provides although a minority were concerned about the school's arrangements for managing pupils' behaviour and they did not feel that the school responded well to their concerns. Inspectors found no cause for concern in pupils' behaviour but the school could communicate more effectively with parents in order to resolve their concerns.

Governance

Governance is good. A new governance structure was adopted in September 2015. An Assistant Director of Education (ADE), from the Cognita group, chairs the governance committee. She works closely with the school, monitors aspects of its work, checks compliance with statutory guidance and carries out the headteacher's performance management. There are six formal meetings with the school during the academic year: two with the ADE, two with the Safeguarding Chair, one with the finance director and one with the chief executive. The minutes of these meetings make clear that there is rigorous monitoring of the school's work, including in all aspects of safeguarding. Actions are clearly identified, timelines for the completion of work are in place and the outcomes of any planned work are checked before the action is signed off. Lines of accountability are clear and even at this early stage it is evident that the new system is having a positive impact.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS' PROVISION

The quality and standards of the early years' provision for Reception-age children are good. The learning programmes and curriculum are good. They are broad, and have depth and relevance. Equality and diversity are actively promoted. British values are promoted very effectively. Arrangements to protect children meet the statutory requirements and promote their welfare effectively. The school works well to prevent radicalisation and extremism in the early years.

Leadership and management are good, with the school leadership and the Head of Early Years sharing an ambitious vision for the provision and a clear understanding of ways to achieve this. There is robust self-evaluation, and this supports sustainable improvement. The early years' provision has experienced staff changes during the present academic year. School leaders have monitored the provision effectively and rightly identified issues which have recently arisen in the Reception classes. They are taking steps to address these. They have a

particularly good understanding of what is needed to raise every member of staff's expectations of what the children can achieve and how to achieve it. This means that some aspects of teaching and learning require improvement, particularly where inconsistent practices constrain the children's learning. Letter formation, how to hold pencils, preferred font and writing styles are examples of practices which are not sufficiently consistent within and between classes, and these slow the children's progress. They also affect the children's capacity to understand how they might make progress and how they might learn effectively. The children generally behave well, especially in lessons taught by specialists such as in PE, but not all teachers have the same high expectations of children's attentiveness and concentration. This affects adversely the pace of lessons, especially when teachers want to ensure that all children are paying attention before introducing new ideas or themes, and where this occurs, children's behaviour, and teachers' management of it, require improvement.

Assessment is good and well managed. A range of assessments is used to inform planning. The school is continuing to use the Early Years Profile and also Baseline assessments. The Head of Early Years is monitoring the range of assessments used in order to ensure that these are both useful and not burdensome.

The children's personal development and welfare are good. They are self-confident and have good self-awareness, although their understanding of how to be a successful learner is not consistently reinforced by all staff. The children's social and emotional security is good. They have good relationships with the staff. Attendance is regular and prompt. Children understand how to keep themselves safe in class. They are developing their awareness of the values of keeping themselves healthy and exercising. Cultural development is also good. The children are being well prepared to respect others and contribute to wider society and life in Britain today.

The outcomes for some children require improvement to ensure that they all progress well from their different points. Whilst most children meet or may exceed the level of development that is typical for their age, not all progress is sufficiently good to help children realise their full potential, and this is due to inconsistent teaching practices in the Reception classes.

SCHOOL DETAILS

Name of school:	Akeley Wood Junior School			
Address of school:	Wicken Park Wicken Park Road Wicken Milton Keynes MK19 6DA			
Telephone number:	01908 571231			
Email address:	enquiries@akeleywoodschool.co.uk			
Web address	www.akeleywoodschool.co.uk			
Proprietor:	Cognita Schools Ltd			
Person registered with DfE as proprietor under paragraph 20 of Part 4:	Chris Jansen			
Head Teacher:	Clare Page			
Early Years Manager	Nicola Masters – Head of EYFS and KS1 Mrs Nicola Boddy – Nursery Manager			
DfE Number	928/6045			
Type of school	Independent Day School			
Annual fees (nursery)*	Nursery 12-30months		£11,985.00	
	Nursery 2.5-4+		£11,730.00	
Annual fees (school)	Reception, Years 1 & 2		£9,090.00	
	Years 3, 4, 5 and 6		£11,250.00	
Age range of pupils	12 months -11years			
Gender of pupils	mixed			
Total number on roll	full-time	272	part-time	52
Number of children in registered nursery		20		52
Number of children under-5	Boys:	53	Girls:	28
Number of compulsory school age pupils	Boys:	160	Girls:	92
Number of pupils with statements of special educational need	Boys:	1	Girls:	0
Number of pupils with English as an	Boys:	15	Girls:	9

additional language				
Type of inspection	School inspected under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008*			

*Please note that there is a separately published report on the quality of the Early Years' Registered Setting which was inspected under sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006.

This report has been prepared by the School Inspection Service, which provides independent professional inspection of all schools affiliated to the Focus Learning Trust, and members of the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship or Cognita group. The report is available from the School Inspection Service website: www.schoolinspectionsservice.co.uk.