

Bridgewater School

Bridle Way, Billet Lane, Berkhamsted, HP4 1ES

Inspection dates 5–6 November 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Early years provision		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- School leaders have not focused sharply enough on improving teaching. The targets they set teachers are not challenging enough.
- Following a review of its performance, the governing body has sharpened its operations, but new systems have yet to realise an impact on its challenge and support for the school.
- Subject leaders do not all have the skills and expertise to check on performance in their areas so they can plan action to secure improvements.
- Teaching is not consistently of the quality needed for pupils to make good progress. Expectations of what the more able pupils can achieve are not always high enough.
- The progress of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is not good enough because teaching does not focus closely on meeting their particular learning needs.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils requires improvement. The gap between their test results and others is wider than seen nationally.
- Teaching assistants do not contribute significantly to the pupils' learning at Key Stage 2.
- Provision in the early years requires improvement because teachers do not always make sure that the more able children are challenged enough by the activities they are given.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils behave well. They are unfailingly polite and show great care and consideration for others at all times.
- The pupils' positive attitudes to learning contribute to the hardworking and purposeful atmosphere in each classroom.
- Governors and leaders make sure the welfare of the pupils is of paramount importance. This enables pupils to feel safe and happy in school.
- Children in the early years benefit from access to the 'forest school' (woodland classroom), where they can explore and enjoy learning about the natural world.
- The school focuses strongly on developing values of tolerance and respect. Music and sport play a major part in the pupils' lives and experiences.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 20 lessons, nine of which were seen together with the headteacher or other senior staff.
- Inspectors looked at work in pupils' books. These included records of the learning of children in the Nursery and Reception.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils, school staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and another governor. A telephone discussion took place with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 105 responses to Ofsted's online parent questionnaire, Parent View.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including: the school's own information on pupils' current progress, planning and monitoring documentation, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and documents relating to safeguarding.
- Inspectors also took account of the 17 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Martin Beale, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Gillian Walley	Additional Inspector
Vreta Bagilhole	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is above average in size. The process of changing from a middle school to a primary school started in September 2013. Currently the school has classes from the Nursery to Year 1 and from Years 4 to 6. None of the pupils in these classes had been in the school before September 2013.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- At about one pupil in fourteen, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for additional funding, known as the pupil premium, is much smaller than average.
- One pupil in 20 is supported through school action. This is below the national average. One pupil in 25 is supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs. This is also below the national average.
- There have been considerable change in staff since September 2013. The headteacher and deputy headteacher both took up post at this time. There have also been considerable changes to governing body membership.
- The Nursery caters for 60 children on a part-time basis. At the time of the inspection the Nursery only operated in the morning.
- The school hosts before and after school clubs. These are privately run and so not part of this inspection.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the impact of teaching on the pupils' progress by ensuring that:
 - teachers have higher expectations of what the pupils can achieve, particularly the more able
 - teachers ensure that tasks enable all pupils, whatever their ability, to make good progress
 - teaching assistants contribute to learning more effectively at Key Stage 2.
- Sharpen the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - improving the use of assessment to set targets for action against which to measure performance
 - ensuring that targets set for teachers are sufficiently challenging to lead to at least good progress for pupils in their classes
 - providing training for subject leaders to improve the way they evaluate the impact of provision in their areas and plan for improvement
 - checking regularly that changes to the governing body are enabling it to fulfil its role effectively.
- An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management requires improvement

- School leaders and governors have not focused their attention closely enough on making sure teaching is at least of a consistently good quality. Procedures to manage the performance of teachers are not sufficiently rigorous. Targets do not challenge teachers so that meeting them will lead to pupils in their classes making consistently good progress.
- Many subject leaders, including in the early years, are new either to the school or to their positions. Not all have established a clear role in monitoring teaching in their subject or evaluating its impact on the pupils' learning and progress. This is partly because not all have the necessary expertise to be able to do this effectively.
- The school's promotion of equality of opportunity is not sufficiently strong. The pupil premium is not used well enough to increase the progress of disadvantaged pupils. Other than through the top set in Year 6 in mathematics, school leaders have not made sure that teachers challenge the most able pupils sufficiently.
- The curriculum supports well the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It focuses strongly on promoting British values, while making sure that pupils understand and respect different cultures and religions. This helps the school to tackle any potential discrimination. The pupils' experiences of music are extensive through specialist teaching, and opportunities to learn an instrument or participate in choirs and orchestra. The school has adapted its programmes to support National Curriculum changes but these have yet to lead to consistently good achievement in reading, writing and mathematics.
- School leaders have been successful in supporting the headteacher in adjusting the age range accommodated in a short timescale. This has included adapting accommodation and developing resources, in many cases from scratch. They have also started to tackle some of the shortcomings in the pupils' achievement such as in writing, particularly in the early years. They have ensured that good behaviour is the norm.
- The school's engagement with the local authority has been strengthened considerably and become more effective since it became a primary school. By continually supporting leaders in reviewing the school's performance, training has been able to be targeted to where it is needed most. This has included supporting the development of the new early years setting.
- The pupils' physical well-being benefits considerably from specialist teaching of physical education at Key Stage 2, along with a wide range of clubs and opportunities to participate in competitive sports. The school has used additional sports funding well to establish physical education as strongly in the early years and at Key Stage 1 as in other year groups.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The fresh view brought by new leadership of the governing body along with the stringent review that has been carried out, have led to the introduction of tighter systems to check the school's performance and challenge leaders to bring about its improvement. There is evidence that this is now starting to happen as governors use their expertise in understanding assessment data to question school leaders more closely about pupil achievement. Although they are aware teaching needs to improve they have not checked how the headteacher links teachers being set and meeting challenging targets, to salary progression. Governors also now recognise that the pupil premium has not had sufficient impact. Governors have carefully modelled the school's future financial position in order that it can be viable in the long-term as pupil numbers change. They are also rigorous in ensuring that safeguarding procedures are implemented and kept up to date.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils move around the school sensibly and play happily together. Year 6 pupils greatly value the responsibility of helping Reception children to settle into school. Pupils wear their school uniform with pride and help to keep the school and their classrooms clean and tidy.
- Pupils are mostly keen, hardworking and want to do well. Their attendance has risen and is well above average. Pupils work constructively together when discussing ideas or undertaking tasks. While most pupils concentrate fully, a small number lose concentration at times and chatter about matters not related to the task in hand.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Parents are strongly of the view that the school takes care of their children and keeps them safe. E-safety training helps pupils to be quite clear about the risks they might face when using the internet and how they can be avoided.
- Pupils say bullying does not happen in their school. Records and parental views support these opinions. Pupils are aware of how name-calling can be hurtful and do their best to ensure that everyone speaks to each other pleasantly.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Teaching does not promote consistently good learning in reading, writing and mathematics across all year groups. This includes in the early years. In some cases, teachers more used to teaching older pupils have not adapted sufficiently to teaching pupils of primary age.
- Teachers do not use assessment information carefully enough to plan and teach lessons that consistently move the learning forward of the different groups of pupils in their classes. This leads to more able pupils listening to explanations of learning they have already secured or not being given work that challenges their thinking. Furthermore, teaching and the work they are given can be beyond the less able or those with special needs. This slows the learning of both groups.
- Teaching assistants often listen to the teacher during whole class teaching without interacting with the pupils. When pupils are working, their role is largely checking pupils are on-task and doing work correctly, rather than with fulfilling a carefully planned and purposeful role that moves pupils' learning forward.
- The teaching of writing is improving and increasing the pupils' progress. Pupils have more opportunity to plan and develop extended pieces of written work and write frequently in science and the topics they study.
- Teachers are providing increasingly useful guidance through their marking. This enables pupils to understand how well they are doing and provides them with suggestions about how to improve their work. This is starting to help pupils eliminate errors more quickly and enhance their writing.
- Teachers manage the behaviour of pupils in their classes well. They use the systems for rewarding and managing behaviour consistently so that pupils are fully aware of their expectations for their behaviour. This means learning usually takes place undisturbed and in a purposeful working environment.

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Pupils are not making consistently good progress at Key Stage 2 from significantly above average attainment at Key Stage 1. This is in part because of teacher changes while the school moved from being a middle school to a primary school. Progress is also not consistently good in either the early years or Year 1 because some of the work the pupils undertake does not push their learning on fast enough.

- In general, the more able pupils do not make sufficient progress. This is seen by relatively few pupils exceeding the rates of progress expected nationally. While several pupils in each year group are working at higher levels, more could be if they were to be challenged more.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make no better progress than others. The school does not ensure that additional programmes they follow are having the desired impact. Teachers identify these pupils in their planning but do not consistently provide teaching that meets their specific needs.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils requires improvement and is no better than for others in each year group. The attainment of disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 in 2014 lagged behind others in the year group by over four terms in mathematics and more than a year in reading and writing. The gap closed slightly over the year before. Their attainment was much lower than other pupils nationally by over one year in mathematics, just under one year in writing and six months in reading.
- Year 6 test results were significantly above average in all subjects in 2014. They rose in mathematics but fell slightly in writing. Action taken to improve writing is beginning to have a positive impact.

The early years provision requires improvement

- Early years leadership has successfully established the new setting but is not effectively monitoring and evaluating the impact of provision on the children's progress.
- Children enter the Nursery and Reception with skills that are at least typical for their age and higher than this for several in their communication and personal development. Changes of staff during last year meant good progress was not consistently achieved, although attainment was above average by the end of Reception.
- Teaching requires improvement because teachers do not always use assessment information to fine-tune teaching to meet the learning needs of the more able children. This was reflected last year in relatively few children exceeding levels expected for their age by the end of Reception. Phonics (sounds that letters make) are generally taught well, but as at other times, adults do not always enable the more able children to make progress as quickly as possible.
- The children's learning is now benefitting from a stable staff team and much improved provision. However, their progress is not yet consistently good across all areas of learning. Children behave well and approach their learning with enthusiasm. Interesting and well-resourced activities grab and hold their attention for considerable periods of time. Adults interact well with the children to move their learning forward, such as by suggesting ideas they might like to explore. The 'forest' area is a tremendous asset and inspires the children to discover nature and how to look after the environment.
- Teachers have tackled weaknesses in the children's writing evident from their attainment last year. Children now have the opportunity to write in a wide variety of contexts. This is sometimes when working directly with an adult, or when working by themselves, such as when taking orders in the 'café'. As a result, they have made good progress this year in their writing.

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	117541
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	447760

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	290
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jon Rollit
Headteacher	Caren Doodson
Date of previous school inspection	3 July 2012
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