

# Gade Valley Junior Mixed Infant and Nursery School

Gadebridge Road, Hemel Hempstead, HP1 3DT

## Inspection dates

6–7 November 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
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 school requires improvement. It is not good because

- The quality of teaching is not consistently good enough across the school to make sure pupils make good progress.
- In a few lessons, teachers do not show high enough expectations for what pupils can achieve. The work is too easy to help the most able pupils reach the higher standards they are capable of.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are not always provided with activities that challenge them to extend and deepen their learning, so they do not reach a good level of development.
- The teaching of phonics (linking letters with sounds) is not as good as it should be. As a result, standards in phonics are below average.
- Pupils do not always understand how to improve their work, and teachers do not always check to make sure pupils have responded to their advice.
- Standards in writing are lower than in reading and mathematics.
- Leaders at all levels, including governors, have started to bring about change. However, these improvements are at an early stage and have not yet made a full impact on teaching or achievement.
- The monitoring of teachers' performance is not focused sharply enough on the impact of teaching on pupils' progress.

### The school has the following strengths

- Pupils get on well together at break times and support each other well. They have good attitudes to learning, behave well and feel safe in school.
- Many opportunities for social, moral, spiritual and cultural education, especially through assemblies, musical activities and other lessons, encourage pupils to explore different faiths and cultures.
- Displays related to current topics are well presented, bright and colourful.
- The school gives good help and guidance to disadvantaged pupils supported through the pupil premium.
- The school offers a good range of after-school clubs and links well with the local secondary school to enhance the curriculum.

## Information about this inspection

- The team made 12 class observations, some of which were carried out jointly with the headteacher or the deputy headteacher. Inspectors visited all classes to look at pupils’ work.
- Inspectors heard pupils read, attended an assembly and looked at pupils’ books.
- The team looked at a wide range of school documents, including safety, topic and subject materials, monitoring files, policies and the school’s own evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses.
- The team spoke with pupils over lunch, in the classroom and in the playground. Discussions were held with senior leaders and those with whole-school subject responsibilities, teachers, parents, four governors and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of 40 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and the views of 14 parents who spoke to them in the school playground. They also considered the 21 responses to the staff questionnaire.

## Inspection team

Gillian Bosschaert, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Fatiha Maitland

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school is average in size for a primary school. It has a part-time nursery and a full-time Reception class.
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, at around 12%, is well below average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium is 18%, which is below average. The premium provides additional funding for pupils in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for progress and standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The headteacher is part-time. The full-time deputy headteacher has been in post for four terms. The current leadership team have been in post for three terms.

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

- Improve teaching across the school so that pupils make the best possible progress, by:
  - providing work in lessons that is engaging and effectively challenges all ability groups, especially in writing
  - developing marking to consistently show pupils how they can improve their work, and making sure pupils learn from the advice given
  - providing further training for staff in teaching phonics, and making full use of coaching to help teachers improve their skills.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
  - focusing the monitoring of teachers' performance more effectively on improving pupils' progress.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management requires improvement

- The school has improved since the employment of the new senior leadership team. However, leadership and management are not yet strong enough to secure consistently good teaching and progress across the school. The areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection have been tackled, but not sufficiently quickly, and this has constrained pupils' progress in recent years in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Subject leaders are beginning to have more influence as a result of training and support for staff. However, their monitoring of teaching is not yet focused sharply enough on accelerating pupils' progress, for example in writing. They monitor their subjects fortnightly and offer training to staff when necessary, but not enough has been done to improve the teaching of phonics.
- A specialist teacher, class teachers and teaching assistants support disabled pupils and those who have educational special needs. The new deputy headteacher took over the role of coordinating how these pupils are catered for in September 2014. He has undertaken training and is aware that some changes will need to be made in line with new guidelines.
- The achievement of the very small number of pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium is monitored at pupil progress meetings. The money is used to provide extra support for these pupils, including one-to-one help, with the result that they make good progress.
- Good use of the primary school sport funding has improved pupils' physical education skills and their awareness of healthy lifestyles. In addition, it pays for both effective staff training and the use of specialist teachers from the local secondary school to develop physical education.
- The curriculum makes a good contribution to the pupils' academic and sporting achievement, well-being and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It prepares them well for life in modern Britain. There is a good programme of visits and visitors. During the first day of the inspection Year 3 were visiting St Albans and the Verulamium museum and park to enrich their topic of Roman Britain. After-school clubs also enhance the education of those who attend, particularly through sporting activities.
- Governors and the headteacher send out newsletters to help keep parents informed about school and governing body activities. These are published on the school web site. A parents' council has been formed to provide a parents' voice.
- Governors and the senior leaders have ensured that safeguarding arrangements are effective and meet national requirements. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe in school and at home.
- The school has bought in helpful support from the local authority. Its advisers have improved the accuracy of teachers' assessments of how well children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are doing, and are currently supporting teaching.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Until recently the governors have not held leaders to account well enough for pupils' progress, but their approach is now more rigorous. Governors have worked with the local authority to review their role and are now better informed. They have undertaken training to understand data about school test results and have further training planned. As a result, they understand how well the school is doing and how it compares with similar schools nationally.
  - The governors are frequent visitors to the school and use their expertise well, for example to complement Year 6 mathematics teaching, listen to pupils read and to regularly check the safeguarding and the safety of the premises. They understand the current quality of teaching, and know that pay awards should link to pupils' progress. They understand how any underperformance has been tackled.
  - The governing body makes sure that additional government funding such as the pupil premium and

sport funding is used effectively by checking that pupils given extra support improve their achievement.

## The behaviour and safety of pupils is good

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. The questionnaires completed by staff and many parents concur with this. Pupils develop a good understanding of values through assemblies and subjects. They have been focusing recently on equality and celebrating differences.
- Pupils say that they enjoy school. They play well together in the playground and chat excitedly together in the lunch hall. They move around the school well without fuss or noise. Pupils are proud of their school. They care for their environment and keep it free from litter.
- Pupils take on responsibilities well and are keen monitors to look after the fish and the dwarf lopped eared rabbits in the school quadrangle. They show respect for adults and for one another, listening carefully to each other in the classroom. Pupils say that 'peer mediation', where special monitors get pupils to discuss the problem and settle it amicably, has worked very well and they enjoy this responsibility.
- Pupils generally have very positive attitudes to learning in the classroom and respond well to teaching. They settle quickly to work and cooperate well together at every opportunity. They only become restless when there is insufficient challenge.
- Attendance is average. Every effort is made to ensure that pupils are in school, and most absences are for medical reasons.

### Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say that they feel safe in school and bullying is rare. They are clear that should it occur, it would be dealt with immediately. Records and logs kept by the school confirm this.
- Pupils are greatly looking forward to the cycling proficiency training later in the term to build on other road safety activities already completed.

## The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Pupils' work shows that teaching over time has varied too much in quality to support good achievement. In some classes teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve have not been high enough, with the result that the work set is too easy.
- Teachers do not always give pupils clear advice about how to improve their work. Even where teachers have made helpful comments, they do not always check that pupils have followed the advice in order to learn from mistakes and improve their work.
- The most able pupils are not always given work that stretches them sufficiently, and this hinders their progress and sometimes prevents them from reaching the highest levels of attainment. Sometimes they sit through explanations which they already understand, or in the lower school are given activities that are too easy.
- Better use of teaching assistants has been a recent focus, and support and training have been given. Some are very capable and are able to move pupils on in their learning by simplifying questions and ideas for them, although this developing strength is not yet a consistent feature of lessons across the school.
- Literacy and numeracy are not taught consistently well, and especially phonics. Not enough pupils reach the levels expected for their age and ability in phonics.

- Relationships are good and pupils say they enjoy lessons which can be 'fun', especially in science when they can take part in experiments.
- Teaching in some classes is good, and pupils make good progress because work is set at the right level of difficulty with extra challenge when needed. Pupils understand exactly what they need to do. In these classes, both the teachers and the teaching assistants ask searching questions to check pupils' understanding and make them think harder.

### **The achievement of pupils** requires improvement

- Pupils are not achieving as well as they could be, particularly in the early years and lower Key Stage 2.
- Attainment by the end of Year 6 has been broadly average for the last three years in reading and mathematics. Taking pupils' starting points into account, progress was good in reading in 2013 but required improvement in 2014. Although the proportions who made expected progress were similar to the national average, far fewer made more rapid progress than is the case nationally. Progress in mathematics required improvement in both 2013 and 2014 for the same reason. Too few pupils exceed expected progress because teachers' expectations are not high enough in some classes.
- Progress in writing was rapid for the 2013 Year 6, with the result that pupils reached well above average standards. However, in 2014 the proportion making expected progress and the proportion exceeding expected progress were both below national figures, and standards were lower.
- Too few of the most able pupils reached the highest levels of attainment in writing and mathematics in 2014. The work set for them is still not consistently challenging. When it is too easy their progress slows.
- In 2014, disabled pupils and those who had special educational needs in Year 6 had made slower progress than their peers in reading and writing. While some variations remain, the picture of their achievement is improving over time. This is because senior staff check progress regularly and provide support that is increasingly well focused on pupils' specific needs. Their progress was better than that of other pupils in mathematics.
- Pupils are making good progress in Key Stage 1. This is evident in lessons and in their work. Standards in reading, writing and mathematics were broadly average at the end of Key Stage 1 in 2013 and 2014. However, the results of phonics tests in Year 1 have been below average, even though reading results are average by the end of the key stage. This is because there are still some gaps in knowledge of letters and sounds when pupils start Year 1, which are addressed throughout Key Stage 1.
- Pupils enjoy reading, and those who read to inspectors read well. Sometimes the vocabulary was difficult and the words read without understanding. Pupils assured inspectors that they do look up unfamiliar words in a dictionary.
- Compared to other pupils nationally, most disadvantaged pupils in the 2014 Year 6 made slower progress through the key stage. Their attainment was about two terms behind others in the school and others nationally in reading, but over a year behind others nationally in writing, and a term behind others in the school but two terms behind others nationally in mathematics.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils is now being carefully monitored so rapid action can be taken. It is highlighted at pupil progress meetings and in teachers' planning. Progress is now good and gaps are closing. In Key Stage 1, recent results show disadvantaged pupils reaching higher standards than their classmates and similar standards to other pupils nationally.

**The early years provision****requires improvement**

- When they start school many of the children have not developed the range of skills that are typical for their age, particularly in number, early reading and writing, and physical, social and emotional development.
- Last year there were several changes of staff, which disrupted the children's progress. As a result, the proportion of children who reached a good level of development by the end of Reception was below that seen nationally. None of the children exceeded the developmental goals for their age.
- Progress is faster this year although it varies across the areas of learning in both the nursery and Reception classes because teaching is not consistently good. Adults do not always use their time effectively in order to reach all groups of children and move their learning forward through good interaction.
- Phonic skills are not taught consistently well. Although most children make the progress expected of them only a minority make rapid progress. This is because tasks do not always build on what the children already know and are able to do. For example, sometimes tasks are focused too heavily on one group of children, for example those of higher ability, rather than being modified for the full range of abilities within the class.
- Children are making good progress in communication, physical, social, emotional development because resources are used well, especially in the outside area where children have ample space to play and develop their skills.
- Children behave well and relate well to one another. They have opportunities to talk to each other, share apparatus and try out various activities. The school takes all the necessary steps to keep the children safe. Staff are well trained to care for the health and well-being of the children.
- The new early years leader has quickly assessed what needs to be done to improve the provision made for the children. She has clear plans for how the early years curriculum should be developed further and is currently working with the local authority to improve teaching and accelerate the progress the children make.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	117249
<b>Local authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	449161

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	230
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Peter Besley
<b>Headteacher</b>	Patricia Bandle
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	11 November 2010
<b>Telephone number</b>	01442 391324
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