

Bridgewater Primary School

Bridle Way, Billet Lane, Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire HP4 1ES

Inspection dates

17–18 November 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

- The headteacher provides strong leadership, which has helped to secure improvements since the previous inspection. Senior leaders and governors share her vision for the school.
- Governors are well informed and provide effective levels of challenge and support that have helped the school to improve.
- Teachers' high expectations of pupils can be seen in the demands they make of them in lessons and the challenging targets that are set for individual pupils.
- Most teachers provide pupils with valuable feedback and guidance on their work which moves learning on quickly. However, on occasion, this guidance is not precise enough to help pupils make rapid progress.
- Current pupils are making good progress across a range of subjects. The tracking system is not consistently well developed for all subjects.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and conduct themselves well around the school, showing consideration and respect towards adults and each other.
- While most pupils take pride in their work, the handwriting and presentation of some pupils is not as neat as it could be.
- The broad and interesting curriculum supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and helps them to develop their understanding of British values.
- Parents who responded to the Ofsted online questionnaire expressed overwhelming support for the school.
- Children make a good start in the Nursery and Reception Years because teaching and provision are good.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment to improve pupils' outcomes by:
 - ensuring that the guidance that staff give to pupils is precise enough to move on pupils' learning quickly
 - insisting that pupils present their work well, including the quality of their handwriting
 - embedding the school's assessment and tracking system to ensure that it is equally effective across all national curriculum subjects.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders and governors are ambitious for the school. They have a thorough understanding of the school's context and have put in place a clear plan to ensure continuous improvement. Since the previous inspection, the governors have supported changes to the leadership team which have strengthened it.
- Senior leaders regularly check the quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' learning and progress. Together with middle leaders, they also support less experienced teachers to develop their skills.
- The importance of good staff development is recognised. Leaders ensure that teachers and teaching assistants benefit from appropriate professional development. Good-quality training, together with robust application of performance management, has ensured that historic inconsistencies in the quality of teaching have been addressed. Teaching is now consistently good across the school.
- Middle leaders contribute to the regular monitoring of teaching by looking at pupils' books and conducting reviews in their subject areas. Any areas for development which are identified are speedily addressed.
- Leaders also check that teachers' assessments of learning are accurate and reliable, so that they can be used as a basis for allocating additional support to any pupil who is at risk of falling behind.
- Pupils' progress in all national curriculum subjects is regularly tracked to show progress from their starting points. The system used is well developed for English, mathematics, modern foreign languages and physical education, but less well for other curriculum subjects.
- The example of leaders and other adults establishes a culture where modern British values are promoted well. Through a range of activities, such as through the school council and as house captains, pupils have opportunities to make a difference to the life of the school. The broad and balanced curriculum and underlying school aims and ethos ensure that pupils develop their understanding of a range of values including inclusiveness, equality, tolerance, respect and determination.
- Leaders, including governors, have improved the way they communicate with parents, including information about the progress that pupils make. Parents now say that communication is excellent.
- Interesting and effectively planned topics and themes result in pupils achieving well in a range of subjects. For example, pupils make good use of their 'topic days', such as that for Year 3 on European cities where they developed their research skills. Pupils benefit from, and greatly enjoy, taking part in 'forest' learning activities.
- An extensive programme of visits and visitors enriches the curriculum. During the inspection, pupils benefited from a visit from a representative from the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC). They have also enjoyed visits to the science park and a local farm. Pupils talked enthusiastically of a forthcoming trip to the pantomime.
- Leaders spend the extra funding for the small number of disadvantaged pupils wisely and effectively. They regularly evaluate the impact of this provision on pupils' progress. Disadvantaged pupils currently in the school make good progress.

- The school makes good use of its extra funding for sport. Sports coaches provide lessons in a wide range of sports, both within school time and as an after-school activity. High proportions of pupils attend and enjoy sports clubs, including those for boys' and girls' football, basketball, dance, netball and gymnastics. Pupils also participate in a variety of sporting competitions.
- The local authority knows the school well and has provided appropriate support and challenge which have contributed to its improvement.

Governance of the school

- Governance is highly effective. Governors have a very detailed knowledge of how well the school is doing and make a significant contribution to school improvement.
- Since the previous inspection, the governing body has audited and extended its skills. A review of governance has also been undertaken. Consequently, governors are now considerably more effective and skilled in holding leaders to account. They ensure that they carry out their role in leading the school effectively to help it to improve.
- The governing body has a good knowledge and understanding of school performance data. They make good use of current information on pupils' progress to evaluate the quality of teaching and satisfy themselves that the school's approach to managing staff performance is robust enough.
- Governors have ensured that leaders have acted on the findings of the pupil premium review. They check the impact of additional funding on diminishing any differences between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally, and challenge leaders as to whether the most able pupils are fulfilling their potential.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school.
- The school works effectively with external agencies where appropriate, to ensure that all aspects of health and safety are met. Leaders take swift action to secure pupils' welfare when needed, as quick and efficient referral systems are in place.
- School leaders make regular and thorough checks on staff, governors and visitors to ensure the safety of all pupils. Teachers and pupils are very aware of the school's procedures for safeguarding. All training for staff is up to date and there is good awareness of obligations for preventing radicalisation and extremism.
- Leaders ensure a safe environment for pupils at all times through regular risk assessments.
- Attendance is above the national average. Good attendance is promoted through rewards and celebration assemblies. Parents are regularly reminded of the importance of good attendance. Any absence is promptly followed up.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and know their pupils well, due to accurate assessment. They use this to plan interesting topics and lessons, which pupils enjoy and which challenge them appropriately.
- Classroom learning environments provide a good range of both challenge and support for learning. Teachers use a stimulating range of resources, including information

technology, to explain new ideas and concepts effectively.

- Teaching assistants are well used and provide effective support for small groups of higher-ability or lower-ability pupils and for individuals. Thus, all groups of learners are supported to make good progress across the school. This includes disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- There are many opportunities for pupils to discuss their ideas, whether in pairs or in groups. This helps them to develop their collaborative and their speaking and listening skills and deepen their learning. When working independently, pupils show resilience and perseverance. For example, Year 3 pupils remained engaged for a sustained period during their topic-day work, researching European cities.
- Relationships between pupils in class and between them and their teachers are highly positive. Pupils demonstrate good attitudes to learning.
- Teachers plan a range of activities to ensure that all pupils, including the most able, are challenged at the right level. In key stage 1 mathematics lessons, challenge boxes and tables ensure that there is always something for the most able pupils to do, should they finish the work they have been set.
- Effective questioning helps teachers assess pupils' understanding and to challenge them and deepen their thinking. Many teachers ask probing and targeted questions of individual pupils to ensure that they are challenged appropriately from the start of lessons. Where this is not the case, some pupils are not fully engaged and lose concentration, which slows their progress.
- While teachers give feedback in line with the school's assessment and feedback policy, there are occasions where this advice is not precise enough. In English and mathematics, teachers give specific guidance which helps pupils to make rapid gains in their learning. However, in other subjects, the support is more variable. On occasion, pupils are not consistently well supported to think more deeply about their learning or apply their new skills to more complex tasks.
- Handwriting and presentation has been a focus across the school. All pupils have a copy of the 'non-negotiables' for presentation at the front of their books or displayed on their tables. However, the presentation of a few pupils is still not good enough and this is not always addressed in teachers' marking. Consequently, some pupils' handwriting and presentation is not improving as quickly as it should.
- The teaching of phonics is good, and higher than average proportions of children pass the phonics test in Year 1. This means that even weaker readers have the skills to understand letters and the sounds they make. The most able readers read with fluency and good expression. Reading areas in all classrooms encourage pupils to develop a love of reading.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils are well cared for. They say they feel safe in school, and parents' views echo this.
- The curriculum provides good opportunities for pupils to learn about keeping themselves safe, including when on the internet. A range of external visitors support the school in this aspect.
- Pupils are very clear that they know who they can talk to if they have any concerns.

They are aware of bullying and the different forms it can take, but say that it is very rare. They appreciate the 'worry boxes' which allow them to voice a concern without speaking directly to an adult.

- Pupils are very supportive of each other, as seen during a celebration assembly where they displayed their obvious pride in their own achievements and those of fellow pupils, applauding enthusiastically.
- There are many opportunities for pupils to take on responsibilities across the school. These include elected members of the school council, sports and house captains, key stage 1 lunchtime buddies, members of the eco-council and travel ambassadors. These opportunities help to prepare pupils for the next stage in their education and life in modern Britain.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They have positive attitudes to learning and enjoy coming to school. This is reflected in their good attendance and high levels of concentration during lessons. Pupils told inspectors that one of the best things about school was their teachers.
- Pupils behave well when moving around the school, for example at breaktimes and lunchtimes and when entering and leaving assemblies. Parents concur that pupils behave well at school.
- Pupils are courteous and well mannered. They are mature and confident when talking to adults. They listen well to both adults and their peers and show respect for the views of others. In turn they are confident that their views are listened to.
- During lessons, pupils respond quickly to the instructions of adults. Incidents of low-level disruption or distraction are very rare. Occasionally at the start of lessons, when teachers are explaining work to them, some pupils can lose concentration before they are sent off to work on their tasks.
- Pupils understand the systems for rewards and sanctions, respecting and responding to them appropriately.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- At the end of Year 1, pupils consistently achieve well in the phonics check compared with others nationally.
- At the end of key stage 1 in 2016, the proportion of pupils who reached the expected standard was above the national average for reading, writing and mathematics. The proportion who reached greater depth in these subjects was also above national averages. From their starting points at the end of the Reception Year, this represents good progress.
- School tracking information and work in pupils' books show that pupils currently in the early years and in Years 1 to 3 are making good progress from their starting points in a range of subjects, including English and mathematics. This includes the very small number who are disadvantaged, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, the most able pupils and those who need to catch up.
- At the end of key stage 2 in 2016, the proportions of pupils who reached the expected standard for reading and who achieved the higher standard were above average. For mathematics, the proportion reaching the expected standard was above average, while that for the higher standard was below. In writing, the proportion reaching expected

standards was in line with the national average, while the proportion reaching greater depth was below the national average.

- The prior external information held for the 2016 cohort indicates that they had high attainment at the end of key stage 1. Current progress information shows that from these points, pupils made more than expected progress overall in reading, expected progress in mathematics, and significantly below expected progress in writing.
- As none of last year's Year 6 pupils attended the school in key stage 1, the school relies on its own accurate assessments. The information shows that pupils made good progress across a range of subjects, including in reading, writing and mathematics, from the time they joined the school. The same is true of the current Year 6, who were allocated to the school in 2013, at the time of its re-designation. School tracking information and work in their books also shows that most are making good progress this year.
- Parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and those spoken to during the inspection were unanimous in their view that their children are making good progress and are well taught at the school. Consequently, pupils leave the school with the knowledge, skills and understanding, as well as the drive and commitment, to make a good start at secondary school.

Early years provision

Good

- The early years provision is well led. It is effective in both the Nursery and Reception classes. Children get the support they need from the moment they join the school. Consequently, they make strides in their learning, behave well and develop positive relationships with adults and their peers. They leave very well prepared for the challenges of Year 1.
- Most children enter the Reception Year with skills broadly typical for their age, although a number are lower than this on entry. All children make at least typical progress and many make more than this. As a result, the proportion of children that reach a good level of development at the end of the Reception Year is above the national level.
- Teachers plan meticulously to ensure that children learn well in both the teacher-led sessions and in their independent play. Teachers assess children's progress regularly to identify what children know and can do. This level of assessment and planning is securing high-quality provision across all the areas of learning, which contributes to children's good progress.
- Both indoor and outdoor environments provide many opportunities for children to engage with writing and number independently. Provision is child-led, creative, open-ended and effective. Children were observed to stay focused on their own activities for significant amounts of time. Innovative use is made of the rich outdoor space, including the 'forest' learning area.
- Children enjoy the large number of activities available for them during child-initiated play. However, adults cannot always supervise this wide range of activities to ensure that all children are consistently challenged. Consequently, children do not always learn as well as they could do during these activities.
- The school works hard to keep parents well informed about progress and next steps. The early years leader also seeks out parental views and acts appropriately on their feedback.

- There are only a very small number of children who are disadvantaged, so meaningful comments about their progress cannot be made.
- Children in the early years are safe and well cared for. All the necessary policies and procedures relating to safeguarding are in place. Adults in the early years have undergone the required training that all staff at the school receive.

School details

Unique reference number	117541
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10019605

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 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	293
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Helen Simpson
Headteacher	Caren Doodson
Telephone number	01442 871 231
Website	http://www.bridgewater.herts.sch.uk/
Email address	admin@bridgewater.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	17–18 November 2014

Information about this school

- Bridgewater School is slightly larger than the average primary school.
- Almost all pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium is much lower than average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is much lower than average.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- Since the previous inspection there have been several staffing changes, including at senior and middle leadership level. The governing body has been reconstituted, with new committees and governors in place.
- Because of re-designation from a middle school to a primary school in September 2013, there are currently no pupils in Years 4 or 5. In key stage 2 there is one Year 6 class and two Year 3 classes.

- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Children in the Reception Year attend full time. Children in the Nursery attend part time.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 19 lessons across the school and looked at pupils' work in all lessons. Twelve visits were made jointly with members of the senior leadership team. In addition, two assemblies were observed and drop-ins were made to several lessons.
- Alongside senior leaders, inspectors reviewed pupil progress data, information about the performance of teachers, documents relating to safety and behaviour and information pertaining to safeguarding.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read. They spoke with pupils in lessons, at lunchtime and playtimes and met with several groups of pupils separately. They also spoke with parents when they were delivering their children to school.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders and members of the governing body. A telephone conversation was also held with a representative from the local authority.

Inspection team

Joan Beale, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Vanessa Love	Ofsted Inspector
Edel Gillespie	Ofsted Inspector

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