

# Gade Valley Primary School

Gadebridge Road, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire HP1 3DT

## Inspection dates

9–10 November 2016

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
Early years provision	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- The relatively new headteacher provides very strong leadership. His work has transformed the school over the last year.
- The headteacher is well supported and challenged by the senior leadership team and the governing body.
- Over the last year, leaders have secured good improvements in outcomes for pupils and in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Pupils' attainment is rising across the school and was above average in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6 in 2016.
- Pupils are taught well. Teachers have consistently high expectations in English and mathematics, ensuring that pupils make good progress.
- Early years provision is good. Children make good progress in both the Nursery and Reception classes. Teachers know the individual needs of children very well and plan engaging activities that help them to learn quickly.
- Across the school, teaching provides the right level of challenge for different groups of pupils most of the time. Occasionally, especially when pupils are working together as a whole class, there is too little challenge for the most able.
- Pupils are good ambassadors for the school. They behave well and are polite and courteous. They show good respect to teachers and each other.
- Pupils feel safe. The school's effective safeguarding systems are closely followed by all members of staff.
- Disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are given well-targeted support that helps them to make good progress.
- Parents are extremely pleased with recent improvements, especially the quality of communication between home and school.
- The school website does not report in enough detail about the use and impact of the pupil premium to support disadvantaged pupils.
- Pupils develop good skills in physical education, computing and art. In science, history and geography, their work is not of such a consistently high quality. Topics in these subjects are sometimes studied in too little detail.
- Work in and out of lessons make a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Key values such as tolerance, citizenship and responsibility are strongly promoted and are reflected in all aspects of the school's work.

## Full report

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

- Improve the quality of pupils' work in science, geography and history by ensuring that topics in these subjects are studied in sufficient detail to enable pupils to develop skills, knowledge and understanding more quickly.
- Ensure that there is always enough challenge for the most able, especially when the whole class is working together.
- Ensure that the school website includes all the required information about the use and impact of the pupil premium.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- The school is very ably led by the comparatively new headteacher. He is supported well by a skilled senior leadership team. Together, they have established a culture of high expectations that has helped to improve greatly all aspects of the school's work.
- Both staff and pupils have responded well to the challenges posed by the new headteacher over the last year. Staff are very positive about recent changes and all those who completed the inspection survey said that they enjoy working at the school. Pupils know that they are expected to behave, show respect for others and work hard. The atmosphere in the school is one of purposeful activity and high aspiration.
- Leaders evaluate the school's performance accurately. This means that the most important priorities are identified and tackled quickly. The school has a wealth of data on how well pupils are learning. This is used well to form the basis of discussion at pupil progress meetings so that leaders can respond quickly to any potential dips in progress. For example, the school has increased its focus on developing reading across the school because an analysis of test results showed that in 2016 a small group of girls did not make enough progress over time.
- Leaders ensure that school developments are always made in the best interests of pupils. There has been a strong and successful focus on improving teaching, which has been supported well by the local authority. Leaders regularly check on the quality of teachers' work. They offer clear guidance on how teachers can improve, and provide support and training to encourage this to happen.
- Subject leaders in English and mathematics play a crucial role in supporting teachers and securing improvement in their areas of responsibility. They are knowledgeable about their subjects and have a good understanding of what still needs to improve. Their support has been instrumental in the rapid pace of change over the last year.
- The leadership of science, history and geography is less well developed. Leaders in these subjects have not had the same impact as English and mathematics leaders because they are not yet fully involved in monitoring all aspects of provision. The school already has plans in place to strengthen their role in securing improvements in their subjects.
- Leaders ensure that the pupil premium is used well to support disadvantaged pupils throughout the school. Funding helps to employ additional adult support and to give pupils access to the full range of school activities. There is additional support for the most able disadvantaged pupils to help them reach the higher levels by the end of Year 6. Spending is carefully monitored and has a good effect on disadvantaged pupils' social and academic development.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets statutory requirements. Well-planned provision ensures that pupils produce consistently high-quality work in English and mathematics. This is not always the case in science, history and geography because some topics in these subjects are not studied in sufficient detail.
- Teachers make good use of the delightful school grounds to engage pupils in outdoor learning. Pupils also enjoy school visits to, for example, a wildlife park or the Natural

History Museum. These help to bring subjects alive and contribute well to pupils' enjoyment of school.

- Leaders ensure that there is a strong and effective focus on supporting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils show good concern for the needs of others by, for example, raising funds for different charities. Pupils have many opportunities to learn about British values and are well prepared for life in modern Britain. They have a good understanding of values such as tolerance and respect. They keenly take responsibility by being school councillors or peer mediators. They understand how the school's focus on key personal skills such as perseverance and confidence will serve them well in later life.
- Provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is well managed by the relatively new coordinator. The school has improved procedures over the last year so that these pupils are identified more quickly than in the past. Leaders monitor provision carefully and ensure that additional funding for these pupils is used to good effect.
- The vast majority of parents who responded to Parent View are very pleased with the education provided by the school. They say that their children are happy, safe and are making good progress. Parents are especially pleased with the way that leaders have improved communication between home and school since the previous inspection. They are very complimentary about current leadership, typically making comments such as 'The new headteacher is fantastic' and 'Under the new leadership team the school has come on brilliantly.'
- Parents are also very happy with the way that sports provision has been improved. This has been partly achieved by the appointment of a specialist sports teacher and through the judicious use of the sports premium to help to improve teachers' skills and to broaden pupils' experiences of different sports such as rugby and cricket. The pupils are very proud to be selected for school teams and to enter competitions.

### **Governance of the school**

- The governing body has supported leaders well in securing improvement since the appointment of the new headteacher. They are kept very well informed by the headteacher and use this information effectively to challenge and question where needed. They have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and understand how improvement is being secured. Their systems for rewarding good teaching through performance management are thorough and are well understood by teachers.
- The governing body ensures that additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is used properly to improve the attainment and progress of these pupils. However, although the school has a wealth of information on the use of the pupil premium, reporting on the school websites lacks detail and does not do enough to evaluate the impact of spending.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The safety of pupils is given a high priority at all times. Safeguarding procedures are well understood and followed by all staff. Leaders provide regular training for staff to

keep them up to date with any changes in guidance. Staff and governors have a good understanding of the need to protect pupils from radicalisation.

- There are strong relationships with parents and a wide range of external agencies, including the local children's centre, to ensure that pupils are kept safe and their social and emotional needs are being met successfully.
- Staff are vigilant in looking for and tackling and potential safeguarding issues. For example, they have worked very closely with contractors to ensure pupils' safety during ongoing building work on the school site.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

**Good**

- Good teaching ensures that pupils make good progress across the school. Pupils develop positive attitudes towards learning because relationships with their teachers are strong. Teachers ensure that pupils understand what they are learning and can work without fear of failure. As one pupil commented, 'The teachers really help us if we are struggling, so we don't mind making mistakes.'
- Teachers use a good range of strategies to keep pupils involved in their learning. They give pupils interesting work and encourage them to talk about their work even when they are finding it difficult. This helps them to improve skills as problems are quickly identified. For example, in Year 6 pupils confidently discussed with the teacher why they were finding it difficult to write a balanced argument. The teacher's skilful questioning helped to identify their misunderstanding so that it could be addressed quickly.
- Teachers have good expectations of what pupils should achieve and how they should behave. They have good subject knowledge and introduce skilfully new ideas in mathematics and English. Work is generally pitched at the right level for the most able, but occasionally, especially when a teacher is talking to the whole class, their learning is held back because work is too easy for them at these times.
- Teaching assistants are deployed well to support pupils, especially when working with those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. They are well informed most of the time, helping pupils sensitively to improve their skills and knowledge.
- Teachers give pupils feedback in accordance with the school's agreed marking policy. Pupils say that they find this feedback helpful as it shows them what they could do better.
- Nearly all parents feel that teaching is at least good. Teachers make good use of homework to extend work and it is enjoyed by pupils.

### **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 prepared for the next stage of their education because they leave school as confident and self-assured individuals. They understand the value of working hard and are keen to do well.

- Pupils have good attitudes towards learning. They are proud of their achievements, although they do not always do enough to ensure that they present their work neatly enough. Most of the time pupils show good perseverance when working, often choosing the most difficult work when they are given a choice.
- Pupils report that they feel safe at school because everyone takes good care of each other. As one commented, 'We are all part of one big family.' They work together sensibly in lessons and play amicably in the playground, being careful to avoid accidents and mishaps.
- Pupils are very confident that bullying or any other 'falling out' is extremely rare, but that if it does happen, it is tackled very quickly. Pupils say that there is always someone to talk to if they have a worry.
- Pupils know how to avoid the dangers they may face in or out of school. They explain clearly how to stay safe when using the internet and social media. Younger pupils have a good understanding of how to cross safely the comparatively busy road outside school.

## **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Parents and pupils are very clear that behaviour has improved greatly over the last year. They feel that the new behaviour policy has been an important factor in making school expectations clearer. Pupils understand why good behaviour is so important. They say that rewards and sanctions are given fairly and consistently by staff.
- Pupils greatly enjoy school, and rates of attendance were slightly above average in the last academic year. There is a happy working atmosphere in lessons.
- Pupils behave sensibly when moving around school. They are polite and courteous and happily talk to visitors about their work. In lessons, they concentrate well most of the time although, just occasionally, they become inattentive when work does not engage them fully or when moving between activities.
- Parents, pupils and staff all indicate that behaviour is good. Parents say that their children are safe and happy at school.

## **Outcomes for pupils**

**Good**

- Pupils make good progress across the school, whatever their starting points or circumstances. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. Pupils' attainment has improved since the previous inspection and was above average overall by the end of Year 6.
- Leaders are dealing well with a slight gap between pupils' attainment in reading and writing in 2016 national testing at the end of Year 6. Their current focus on making reading more enjoyable through reading challenges and by improving resources is proving effective. Both girls and boys read confidently. The most able express clear preferences for what sort of books they especially enjoy. They can talk about favourite authors. They skilfully use their reading skills to support their learning in other subjects, for example when finding out about mummification in Year 5. Less-able younger pupils have a good knowledge of phonics and are able to use this knowledge

when trying to 'sound out' unknown words. Pupils' attainment in the national phonics screening checks at the end of Year 1 has risen sharply in the last three years and the proportion reaching the expected level in 2016 was broadly average.

- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress from their starting points because of the support they receive. Frequent checks on their progress highlight any gaps in their learning and additional support is arranged where needed.
- Disadvantaged pupils make good progress and any differences between their attainment and that of other pupils nationally are narrowing quickly. Support for these pupils is well targeted and helps them to improve their skills at a rapid pace.
- The most able pupils, including the disadvantaged, achieve well. The school provides many opportunities for them to extend their learning, both in lessons and in activities outside the classroom. Just occasionally their progress slows when teaching does not move their learning on quickly enough.
- As well as making good progress in English and mathematics, pupils are beginning to achieve well in other subjects. Pupils have good computing skills. For example, Year 5 pupils confidently use a computer program to build their own games. In physical education (PE), pupils also improve skills quickly. Pupils produce good-quality artwork and enjoy showing off their music skills by performing in public.
- The quality of pupils' written work in science, history and geography is uneven in quality. At its best in, for example, science books in Year 6, pupils demonstrate a wide range of skills and use them confidently in investigations or experiments. However, in some year groups, activities do not do enough to help pupils develop the depth of understanding required by the curriculum.

## Early years provision

**Good**

- Early years provision has improved significantly since the previous inspection. Children are now being prepared well both socially and academically for their move to Year 1.
- Children's attainment at the end of the Reception Year has been improving since 2014. In 2016, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development was broadly average. This represents good progress from children's different starting points.
- Children learn rapidly because they are taught well. Adults support learning well by asking challenging questions. In the Nursery, a strong early focus on social and emotional development ensures that children settle quickly and become acclimatised to class routines. For example, in the Nursery a simple leaf-sweeping activity outside helped a child to improve her mathematical vocabulary because an adult constantly asked questions about the size of the piles of leaves.
- Teachers ensure that there is a happy working atmosphere in both the Nursery and Reception classes. Child protection and safeguarding arrangements are thorough. Teachers have good expectations and focus strongly on teaching children the importance of good behaviour. Consequently, children behave well and try their best most of the time.

- In the Nursery, the children are able to move freely from the inside to outdoors, unless they are involved in a specific activity with an adult. The outdoor area is well resourced and provides good opportunities for children to improve their skills in the different areas of learning.
- Although the outdoor area for the Reception class was out of action during the inspection due to building work, the teacher did her best to compensate for this by making use of the playground to provide children with opportunities to work outside.
- Across the early years, teachers have good systems for assessing children's prior learning, including making home visits when they start school. Learning journals are detailed and give a clear indication of what children need to learn next. Teachers use this information well to provide the right level of challenge for children most of the time. However, just occasionally, the most able children do not receive enough adult support in developing their ideas so that skills can improve even more quickly.
- Children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are given unobtrusive support to help them take part in all activities. Teachers ensure that the early years pupil premium is used to good effect to help disadvantaged children fulfil their potential.
- Provision is well led and managed. Senior leaders have a good picture of where further improvements are needed. There is a strong focus on closing the gap between the attainment of boys and girls, especially in writing. The curriculum takes good account of their differing needs. It includes plentiful opportunities for boys to improve their writing skills so that they are now making the same good progress in writing as girls.
- Parents are very positive about early years provision, typically making comments such as 'My child has had a great start to their school life and has settled really quickly.' Parents especially like the way that they are encouraged to contribute to children's learning journals by identifying 'WOW' moments that have happened at home.



## School details

Unique reference number	117249
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10019600

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	223
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Besley
Headteacher	Daniel Barron
Telephone number	01442 391324
Website	<a href="http://www.gadevalley.herts.sch.uk">www.gadevalley.herts.sch.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:head@gadevalley.herts.sch.uk">head@gadevalley.herts.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	6–7 November 2014

## Information about this school

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about the pupil premium on its website.
- This is an average-sized primary school with eight classes. Children in the early years are taught in a Reception class and a Nursery.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium is below average.
- The school met the government's current floor standards in 2015, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

- The new headteacher took up post in September 2015.

### **Information about this inspection**

- The inspectors observed pupils' learning in lessons, many of which were observed jointly with the headteacher. In addition, the inspectors made some short visits to observe learning at other times.
- Discussions were held with pupils, staff, representatives from the local authority and members of the governing body.
- The inspectors took account of the views of 49 parents and carers who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View. Inspectors also talked with parents at the start of the school day.
- The inspectors listened to pupils read, looked at their work and school documents, including: the school's own information about pupils' learning and progress; planning and monitoring documents; the school development plan; records relating to behaviour and attendance; safeguarding information; and health and safety documentation.
- The inspectors analysed responses to inspection questionnaires from 23 members of staff and 27 pupils.

### **Inspection team**

Mike Capper, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Henry Weir

Ofsted Inspector

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