

High Beeches Primary School

Aldwickbury Crescent, Harpenden, Hertfordshire AL5 5SD

Inspection dates

28 February–1 March 2017

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- The headteacher ensures that her high expectations for equality of opportunity and achievement are shared and upheld by all.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding. As a result, outcomes for pupils, especially for the most able, have improved since the previous inspection so that they are now outstanding.
- Learning time is used to the full. Lessons are extremely interesting and pupils are eager to learn.
- Staff make accurate assessment of pupils' needs. They use their excellent subject knowledge to deepen pupils' understanding and correct misconceptions.
- Teachers understand how pupils learn. They use this well to ensure that all pupils have an equal chance to succeed.
- Additional funding for pupils who are disadvantaged and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is used very well. As a result, pupils make rapid progress.
- Leaders and governors ensure that the arrangements for safeguarding are very effective and well implemented by staff.
- Parents are very supportive of the work of the school and express confidence in its leadership.
- Pupils are extremely well prepared for secondary education. They are taught how to ask probing questions for themselves.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. From a very young age children understand why it is important to behave well.
- The rich curriculum and the outstanding provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development contribute to pupils' excellent personal development. The school prepares pupils exceptionally well for their future lives as British citizens.
- Governors understand the work of the school. They challenge leaders effectively so that provision and achievement are the best they can be.
- Early years provision is not yet outstanding because assessment is not used well enough to accelerate children's progress. The learning environment is not exploited fully. Nonetheless, teaching is good and children are well prepared for Year 1. The coordinator ensures that parents are involved with their children's learning.
- Phase leaders and some subject leaders are new to their role. The way they evaluate their areas of responsibility and support senior leaders require some consolidation.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of early years provision by:
 - making sure that assessment is precise and used more effectively to accelerate children's progress
 - improving the indoor and outdoor learning environments.
- Improve the skills of new phase and subject leaders to ensure that they contribute more fully to the leadership of the school.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The headteacher leads the school exceptionally well. Soon after her appointment in September 2015, she quickly gained the trust of staff and set out her clear vision and ambition to make High Beeches School the best it could be. She is managing the expansion of the school from a one-form- to a two-form-entry primary school very effectively. She is an excellent role model for staff and pupils alike.
- The headteacher ensures that the whole school community shares her uncompromising commitment to high standards, equal opportunities and inclusion. She has a passionate commitment to her own and staff's continued learning. Staff appreciate the many opportunities they have to develop their skills and career aspirations. As a result, pupils benefit from highly skilled teaching and make outstanding progress in their learning and personal development.
- The deputy headteacher is highly knowledgeable and works very effectively with the headteacher. Together, they frequently scrutinise information about pupils' achievements and the quality of teaching in great detail. Their evaluations are accurate, if somewhat modest, and used well to inform key priorities and to refine actions so that they become even more effective.
- Leaders are respected beyond the bounds of this school and work collaboratively with local school leaders. The headteacher has set aside her role as a local leader of education to focus on improving High Beeches but she still offers well-regarded professional support to other schools, such as in her expert understanding of provision for groups protected under the Equalities Act. Teachers meet colleagues from other schools to moderate their assessment of pupils' work so that it is accurate.
- The systems in place to manage the performance of all staff and set targets for improvement are rigorous. Leaders ensure that an outstanding quality of teaching is maintained when new teachers join the school. They provide excellent induction and support for teachers new to the profession. All the staff who completed the inspection questionnaire praise the senior leaders for the guidance they receive, the high morale, and excellent team work that help them meet the high standards expected of them.
- Leaders and governors use the physical education and sport premium for primary schools effectively. They ensure that pupils benefit from expert coaching in a range of sports. Many pupils participate in sports activities outside the school day and pupils with sporting talents are recognised and encouraged. Staff have recorded improved levels of health and fitness as a result of initiatives, such as the 'Daily Mile' competition. The funding is used well to train staff.
- The additional funding for pupils who are disadvantaged, including the most able in receipt of such funding, and for pupils who have special education needs and/or disabilities is used very effectively to support their learning and to give them an equal opportunity to succeed. Senior leaders and governors check the impact of this support

carefully and redirect any interventions that are not successful enough. As a result, pupils gain in confidence and improve rapidly.

- The vibrant curriculum, including in the early years, motivates pupils. Teachers' excellent knowledge of their subjects and their understanding of how pupils in their classes learn best mean that pupils are given many opportunities to apply their literacy and numeracy skills across a wide range of subjects. The curriculum for the most able pupils is particularly rich. It includes additional workshops, learning experiences in a local private school and a wealth of other clubs and cultural activities.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is extremely effective. The school's strong values and the staff's moral purpose permeate the whole culture of the school. Pupils have many opportunities to reflect on their rights and responsibilities. They develop a broad perspective on moral, social, cultural and world issues because of the wide range of links and resources which are available to them. For example, pupils have discussed the impact of 'Brexit' and visiting speakers are offering an insight into the world of work such as famous female role models in science. Pupils are exceptionally well prepared for their future lives in Britain. They learn to understand the principles behind fundamental British values as well as how to apply them to their own lives. Displays around the school show how the school promotes an understanding of international affairs such as through the Eastern European shoebox programme and the spotlight-on-Africa topic.
- Parents are highly supportive and appreciative of the school's leaders and staff. They believe that the school enables their children to thrive and learn in a safe and supportive environment. Some parents said that they moved their children from other schools due to their needs not being met and that they are now thriving. Several parents of children with additional learning or emotional needs said how happy they were with the school. Almost all of the 142 parents who completed the online Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View, would recommend the school to others.
- A very small number of parents are worried about the leadership of the school and some say that communication is not good. Inspectors found that the school's website and weekly newsletters are very informative. Opportunities for parents to meet leaders, governors and staff formally and informally are frequent. There is a range of workshops for parents such as on e-safety. Parental comments are taken very seriously.
- The deputy headteacher keeps an overview of provision and outcomes in the early years. She knows exactly why the overall effectiveness is not yet outstanding. With the support of the coordinator, staff ensure that children learn well but assessment is not used enough to accelerate children's progress. The learning environment, indoors and outdoors, is safe and well resourced but it is not exploited fully to support children's huge capacity and eagerness to learn.
- Phase and subject leaders are not contributing enough to the leadership of the school. Some leaders are new to their role and their evaluation skills are underdeveloped. There is scope for them to provide more support to senior leaders, especially as the school continues to grow.

Governance of the school

- Governors are very clear about their own roles and responsibilities. The new chair of the governing body is getting to know the school very quickly. Governors visit the school regularly, are linked to subjects and monitor specific aspects of provision. These activities, alongside the more formal work of the governing body, ensure that governors hold leaders closely to account.
- Governors understand the wide range of performance information that they have to check pupils' outcomes. They ensure that funding is spent wisely and that teachers' pay progression depends on how effective they are.
- Governors ensure that their statutory duties in relation to safeguarding are met. They sustain good communications with families and keep their own safeguarding training under review. They have a well-informed view of current safeguarding issues through the excellent professional knowledge of some members of the governing body.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The headteacher, who is also the designated safeguarding lead, places safeguarding at the top of her priorities. Weekly meetings are held to update staff. Policies are checked and implemented. All staff have had relevant training, including on preventing radicalisation, ensuring that pupils stay safe online and understanding the many facets of bullying. Pupils who are 'digital leaders' take their role very seriously.
- Concerns for pupils known to social care services are recorded in sufficient detail. Chronologies of significant events in pupils' lives are recorded. The filing system ensures that records are easily accessible and kept in good order.
- The designated safeguarding lead knows how and when to access early help services. Contact with the local authority is prompt and the thresholds to access social care services are understood. The school works effectively with external agencies to provide timely support to pupils. The school has access to a family support worker to ensure that families in need of specific advice are helped at times of crisis.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Teachers expect pupils to work hard and pupils respond to this extremely well. This is because, since the previous inspection, teachers have created a very positive learning atmosphere. Over time, they have helped pupils understand how to reflect on their work and to accept that learning from their mistakes can be a good thing. Consequently, pupils take risks and challenge one another in a climate of mutual respect.
- Teachers devote time and effort to understanding the specific needs of individual pupils and how they learn best. Teachers use this extensive knowledge to plan and teach very effective and interesting lessons. The creative homework, nicely presented in the

learning logs, complements and extends the topics covered extremely well. This results in outstanding outcomes for pupils.

- Teachers make sure that pupils develop a deep understanding of key concepts and skills. This is particularly effective for the most able pupils because staff create the right conditions to ensure that they feel comfortable when trying challenging work and are resilient to failure. As one pupil said: 'We get a lot of challenge and are always doing something new.'
- Pupils are provided with specific guidance which enables them to know how well they are doing and how they can improve. Teachers and teaching assistants use accurate assessment and forensic questioning to check pupils' understanding and promptly address their misconceptions. They question pupils very effectively to help them think more deeply about ideas and problems. This enables pupils to think of their own effective questions. For example, pupils in Year 3 were very keen to explain their mythical story to the inspector and confident to ask question about the words they could use.
- Reading and writing are taught very effectively across all years. Pupils learn to consider the style, mood and personalities of characters in books they are reading. Reading is given high profile in the school. One pupil said that it was very important for her to read every day because it helped her do well across all other subjects.
- Pupils write for a wide range of purposes but also learn to enjoy writing for pleasure. Teachers provide an effective balance of guidance and freedom to help pupils improve the content and the structure of their writing. Writing of high quality was seen across many subjects, such as religious education, geography and history. Teachers are working hard to improve the quality of pupils' handwriting further, especially that of some pupils in Year 2 who find joined-up writing still difficult.
- Speaking and listening are used well to help pupils' writing. For example, pupils in Reception listened very carefully to the sound of the letter 'f'; they then practised the sound very carefully before learning how to write it. Their concentration was exemplary.
- Across years, pupils show a love for mathematics. A systematic approach to the teaching of this subject results in excellent progress for pupils from all starting points. The most able pupils have the necessary enthusiasm and passion for the subject to tackle complex mathematical investigations. They apply their knowledge well across other subjects, such as in science and computing.
- Teaching assistants are very knowledgeable about each individual pupil. Communications between teaching assistants and class teachers about pupils' learning are strong. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are very well supported. This enables them to overcome barriers to their learning and personal development. Staff help them develop into resilient and reflective individuals.
- Teaching in Reception is good. Staff work well together to support children and direct them to a range of activities. Assessment is not yet sufficiently precise to accelerate children's progress, especially those who have well-developed skills and have the potential to achieve highly.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- From an early age, pupils learn how to learn. They explain the meaning of concepts such as 'learning powers', 'learning without limits' and 'super learners'. They enjoy working hard, willingly attempt challenging tasks and try their very best. The way they help each other is exemplary. Pupils learn to become active, reflective participants in their community as a result of the wide range of opportunities provided by the school.
- Pupils learn how to reduce risks to themselves in their everyday lives, including when using social media and the internet. They are taught effective strategies to help them evaluate risks.
- Pupils celebrate and thrive on the diversity of the school community. They learn to appreciate one another's views, needs and beliefs. Parents said that new pupils feel very welcome and settle very quickly as a result. Year 6 pupils love to look after children in Reception. High-quality assemblies and the personal, social and health education programme support pupils' development very well.
- Pupils are lively, active and know how to make healthy choices. For example, in physical education pupils know why they need to warm up and younger pupils can explain why they must make the most of breaktime to stretch their body and 'refresh their brains'.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils behave impeccably in and out of lessons even when unsupervised. They spontaneously hold doors, thank staff for their help and understand that excellent behaviour is essential to their success in learning.
- Pupils play safely together and show consideration for the views of others. Bullying and other forms of discriminatory behaviour are very rare. The few pupils who have found it hard to manage their own behaviour at their previous schools usually make a success at this one.
- Pupils say that they are not interrupted from getting on with their work by poor behaviour. The findings of this inspection confirm this. Teaching and the management of learning are so effective that adults do not need to intervene.
- When incidents happen they are investigated very carefully. Records show that these are very rare. A few parents are concerned with bullying. Pupils say that bullying is not tolerated and they know exactly what to do if they are worried about something.
- Attendance is above average and punctuality is exemplary. Leaders ensure that pupils from all groups attend well.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Outcomes for pupils have continued to improve since the previous inspection and are now outstanding. A higher proportion of pupils exceed the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics than is seen nationally at the end of key stage 2. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 are making rapid progress. The school's performance information shows that high standards in the 2017 tests are expected to be maintained.
- The excellent teaching and the very effective action taken by senior leaders and governors have ensured that pupils make outstanding progress from their starting points. Pupils of all abilities are well prepared for secondary school. This is because they have high aspirations and know how to apply their literacy and numeracy skills in subjects other than English and mathematics. Pupils strive to improve their work without the immediate reliance on an adult, such as when spelling the difficult names of dinosaurs.
- Leaders are ensuring that the differences between the outcomes of pupils who are disadvantaged and other pupils nationally are diminishing. Senior leaders and staff know the academic and welfare needs of these pupils very well and give them individual attention. The small number of most-able pupils in receipt of additional funding are identified and interventions ensure that they achieve as highly as others in the school and nationally. The school's focus on reading is particularly beneficial, as is the excellent parental support.
- The proportion of most-able pupils who attain at a higher standard is well above the national average. Across years, the quality of their work in subjects, such as in science, computing and history, is high. Pupils recently won the art competition in the Harpenden Art Festival. Performance information shows that about half of the current Year 6 cohort are on track to reach high standards in writing and mathematics and at least a third in reading. In the early years, outcomes are good overall. Assessment is not used well enough to accelerate the progress of children, especially the most able.
- The relentless practice of speaking and listening ensures that pupils make rapid progress in developing their reading skills. Progress in these skills is outstanding in Year 1. Nearly all pupils reach the expected standard in the phonics screening check by the end of that year and the few who need to catch up have done so by the end of Year 2. Speaking skills are high because staff insist on good diction and clarity of presentation when speaking to an audience. Inspectors observed some excellent presentations during the 'Speakers' Cup' sessions.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make rapid progress from their starting points. The vast majority of children who received support in Reception last year achieved a good level of development in 2016. Current children are doing well. In other years, the large majority of pupils make the progress expected of them. Almost half make good progress in reading and writing and over half in mathematics. This is in response to the close attention teachers and teaching assistants pay to the starting points and learning needs of individuals. It is also as a result of the exceptionally positive attitudes pupils have to their learning and good communication

with parents. One parent said that her weekly meetings with the class teacher are contributing significantly to her child's progress.

- Leaders and teachers quickly spot where standards are not high enough. The reasons for the slower progress of a small group of boys in reading at key stage 1 last year were analysed. Action was taken to promote boys' reading and the progress of boys matches that of girls. Leaders are checking recent performance data to ensure that gender differences continue to reduce.

Early years provision

Good

- Outcomes for children in the two Reception classes are as good as they were at the time of the previous inspection. The overall effectiveness of early years provision is not yet outstanding because, although children do well, many could do even better. Children enter Reception with a wide range of starting points but, for most, their development is slightly above that typical for their age. There is scope to exploit their already good level of knowledge more fully.
- Children make good progress in all areas of learning so that the proportion attaining a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year is above the national average. Children are well prepared to move on to Year 1.
- The early years coordinator is taking effective action to maintain the good quality of the teaching. She ensures that teachers plan interesting and accessible activities both indoors and outdoors. There is a particularly strong emphasis on developing children's use of language and helping them to tackle challenging tasks. For example, children know that there are 'must do' activities, such as writing. Staff direct them sensitively to these.
- Children benefit from a wide range of carefully considered events which help them to understand the core values of the school from an early age and make rapid progress in their personal development. The use of the wildlife area strengthens this further. The excellent attitudes of the children mean that they make full use of the learning and play time. During the preparation for the 'bear hunt', children's concentration was extraordinary.
- The setting provides a safe learning environment. Children live up to the high expectations of behaviour set by members of staff. They share resources politely and play together in a kind and safe manner.
- The views of children and parents are taken into account when planning improvements. Parents who met with the inspectors appreciate the opportunity to express their views and value the information they receive about their children's learning. The contribution that parents make to their children's learning is very good, as exemplified in the learning journals and learning logs.
- Almost all children start Reception having had experience of pre-school education in local nurseries or other pre-school settings. Assessment is not used well enough to help children reach the outstanding standards they should. The environment, indoors and outdoors, is not exploited fully. The outdoor area is cramped and classrooms require

some reorganisation of resources and displays to support children even better in their learning.

School details

Unique reference number	117342
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10023532

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	327
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Julia Higgins
Headteacher	Sara Lawrence
Telephone number	01582 767966
Website	www.highbeeches.herts.sch.uk
Email address	head@highbeeches.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	22–23 February 2012

Information about this school

- High Beeches School is expanding from a one-form- to a two-form entry primary school for pupils aged five to 11. It is due to be at its full capacity by September 2019. The size of the school will then be above average.
- The number of pupils who are supported through the pupil premium funding is below average.
- Most pupils are White British. Just over one fifth of pupils come from a range of different ethnic backgrounds. The vast majority of pupils speak English as their first language.

- The proportion of pupils who have support for special educational needs and/or disabilities is average.
- In the early years, children attend Reception full time. Almost all children have experience of pre-school education in local nurseries and other pre-school settings.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- There have been significant changes in staffing and leadership since the previous inspection. The previous headteacher left in July 2015 to lead another school. The current headteacher joined the school in September 2015. Leadership roles and responsibilities have been reallocated and some leaders are new to their role. A new chair of the governing body took up post in September 2016.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in all classes and several sessions were jointly observed with the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- Throughout the two days of the inspection, inspectors spoke with pupils, individually and in groups, about their learning and safety.
- Inspectors listened to pupils reading. They reviewed pupils' work in lessons and analysed samples of work in books, on display in classrooms and around the school.
- The lead inspector held meetings with a representative of the local authority, the chair of the governing body and several other governors.
- Inspectors held meetings with phase and subject leaders and other staff, including the coordinator for special educational needs and the coordinator for early years.
- Inspectors looked at the school's review of its own performance, its development plan, a number of key school policies and the minutes of governing body meetings. They considered a range of documentation in relation to child protection, safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors analysed 142 responses to the online questionnaire for parents (Parent View). An additional 36 comments were sent to the lead inspector.
- There were 39 staff who completed the Ofsted staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Marianick Ellender-Gelé, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Sally Nutman	Ofsted Inspector
Trish Hardy	Ofsted Inspector
Chris Lake	Ofsted Inspector

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