

Gade Valley JMI and Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117249
Local Authority	HERTFORDSHIRE LA
Inspection number	312547
Inspection dates	12–13 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Keith Sadler

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	212
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev Tony Cavanagh
Headteacher	Mrs Patricia Bandle
Date of previous school inspection	30 September 2002
School address	Gadebridge Road Hemel Hempstead Hertfordshire HP1 3DT
Telephone number	01442391324
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Age group	3-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Gade Valley is an average sized primary school that has a nursery attached. The nursery operates a morning session only. Most pupils come from an area surrounding the school which consists of a mixture of social and owner-occupier housing. Almost all the pupils are from White British backgrounds. Attainment on entry from Reception to Year 1 is average however, mathematical development is below expectations. The proportion of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average and the percentage with a statement of special educational needs is below average.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Gade Valley is a good school on an upward trend and it provides good value for money. It has a caring family atmosphere where pupils enjoy learning together and they achieve well. The school's provision for the care, guidance and support of pupils is outstanding. As one parent said, 'the school provides a warm, welcoming and creative learning environment.' This view reflects the overwhelming support that parents have for the school. They particularly appreciate the fact that their children want to go to school and are so well cared for.

Pupils in all year groups make good progress both academically and personally. Standards are above average and pupils' personal development is good. Over the past two years, staff have improved the system to track pupils' progress and attainment. This is used well, particularly in English, and has been a key to the school's increasing effectiveness. The school has embarked on a good improvement project to strengthen attainment in mathematics, but staff are keenly aware that there is a need to increase the proportion of pupils that gain the higher Level 5 of the National Curriculum. Behaviour is good, relationships positive, and pupils delight in taking responsibility. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall because staff know the pupils well and support their learning needs effectively.

There have been many improvements in the past 18 months and these are the result of good leadership and management of senior leaders and show how the school has good capacity to improve. For example, the curriculum has been developed by planning for closer links between different subjects to make learning more exciting and interesting for pupils. This enables them to use and practise skills learned in one subject effectively in others. Consequently, the school's curriculum is effective. There has also been a strong focus on developing the quality of learning. Pupils now assess their own work, and have a clear understanding of the targets set for them and, due to the good marking, are clear about what they need to do to improve. Taken together, the improvements have led to the school's good overall effectiveness.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The provision in the Reception and Nursery classes is good and has improved since the previous inspection. This has been recognised by the school gaining a quality accreditation from the local authority. Children starting in the Nursery often have poor, communication, creative, personal and social skills. They make good progress in both the Nursery and Reception classes, and by the time they enter Year 1 most are close to the levels expected. However, weaknesses remain in number skills, and in social development; especially among the boys. The children are given good opportunities to develop independence, for example, by being encouraged to select activities, and to contribute towards the planning of topics. Adult-led learning is well assessed and children's progress is recorded in detail. Outdoor learning is well planned and accessible. It is hampered in the Nursery class by the lack of a covered area which limits opportunities for outdoor activities in wet weather. Links with parents are very good as demonstrated by the Reception children's session using computers, joined by parents and younger brothers and sisters.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the proportion of pupils that gain the higher levels in mathematics.

- Provide shade and cover for children in the Nursery class in order that they can continue outdoor leaning in inclement weather.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well. Results in tests at the end of Year 6 show standards that have been significantly above average in three of the past five years. Although there was a slight dip to average standards in 2007 tests, current Year 5 and 6 pupils are on track to achieve standards that are above average. Standards have consistently been higher in English than mathematics. The school recognises this and has a good range of strategies in place to boost standards in mathematics. These are starting to impact, particularly for pupils that find learning hard. The good achievement made by pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is due to the quality of the support they receive. Their needs are identified early and pupils make good progress towards the targets set in their individual learning plans.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils have good attitudes towards school and this is reflected in their good behaviour in lessons and in their willingness to take a full part in activities. There is little bullying and if it occurs pupils are confident it is well dealt with. They clearly enjoy school, as is shown by the consistently good levels of attendance. Pupils have an outstanding level of understanding about how to keep themselves healthy. They make an excellent contribution to the school, local and wider community through the school council, peer mediation, and a wide range of charity fund-raising. They know how to keep themselves safe and their good basic skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT are helping prepare them well for their future lives. Nevertheless, there is scope to enhance preparation for the next stage of pupils' education further by placing even greater focus on mathematical understanding. They have good opportunities to take responsibility and develop independence from their first days at school. Very effective spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is evident throughout the work of the school. For example, the Year 2 pupils' comments about their visit to the war memorial show a deep and reflective appreciation of others' lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

There have been improvements in the quality of teaching and learning since the previous inspection. Lessons are well taught and there are some outstanding features. Relationships are good and staff manage the pupils particularly well. The few pupils that have challenging behaviour are supported very well by both the teachers and support staff. Teachers make clear what the pupils are to learn and they usually match work very well to the wide range of needs present.

Learning is good overall because the activities set are generally interesting and teachers make good use of technology to enliven lessons. They help to support the varying preferred learning styles of pupils by making good use of the interactive white boards and computers in the classrooms. The learning support staff are very skilled and make a positive contribution to pupils' learning. They encourage pupils' efforts and they probe for understanding with good

questions. Assessment is good. Teachers question pupils skilfully to elicit how much they have learned. These assessments are then used well to adapt future learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The statutory curriculum for literacy and numeracy is well planned and increasing use is being made of information and communication technology (ICT) to enhance learning. This happened in a science lesson when pupils had to measure amounts of water using millilitres. Literacy skills were observed being consolidated in a good geographical exercise. However, the planning does not always ensure sufficient challenge for the more able pupils. The school provides a very wide range of extra curricular activities covering sports, dance and drama, reading, music, chess and ICT. Visits to places of interest and visitors to the school are used very effectively to enhance and enrich pupils' learning opportunities. The school uses its own resources well to meet the needs of pupils and the curriculum. It recognises that the lack of an outdoor covered area for the Nursery class limits opportunities to gain maximum benefit from the school grounds.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school provides an outstanding level of care and support for its pupils. The caring nature of the school ensures pupils feel safe there and that they are well looked after. Staff give sensitive support and guidance to those who are in any way vulnerable. They have adults whom they trust and to whom they are happy to turn with problems or concerns. The peer mediation system is exemplary and has a very positive impact on pupils' self esteem and relationships. The school has excellent systems for tracking pupil's academic and personal progress. These have been used well to pinpoint areas for improvement. For example, information to identify pupils at risk of under-performing in English has led to an improvement in standards. This enables staff to support all pupils, especially those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Pupils are given personal targets and together with the effective marking of their work, this helps them to understand exactly what they need to do to improve. The school ensures all expectations regarding the safeguarding of pupils are met; health and safety issues, risk assessments, first aid and child protection requirements are very well implemented.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides good leadership. She is supported well by an effective deputy head and teachers who take their subject responsibilities seriously. All the adults work closely together and there is a strong atmosphere of mutual support. The impact of improvement projects brought about in the past two years has been positive and has led to the school's current good overall effectiveness. This has been based on a secure knowledge of the school's strengths and needs based on good quality self-evaluation processes which include keeping a careful check on provision and the pupils' progress. This has led to a good quality school development plan that effectively identifies improvement areas and how progress toward them is checked.

Governance is good and has improved recently. Governors are very supportive of the school, and they also raise good questions about aspects of provision in order to challenge the school

sensitively to do better. They are directly involved in the monitoring and evaluation of the school's provision. For example, they work alongside teams of subject leaders as they make systematic checks of the school's provision and standards. This enables all to develop a strong understanding of the school's position.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

14 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Gade Valley JMI and Nursery School, Hemel Hempstead HP1 3DT

Thank you for your help when we inspected your school. We thoroughly enjoyed our visit because everyone was so welcoming and friendly. I would like to share with you what we thought.

We think that yours is a good school and that your headteacher is doing a good job. These are the things that we think are best about your school.

- You make good progress in your learning.
- The staff help you to enjoy school, to enable you to be very responsible and to gain high levels of understanding of how to be healthy.
- Your behaviour is good.
- Teaching is good and all the adults take excellent care of you so that you make good progress and stay safe.
- Your teachers help you to have a good understanding of your targets and what you need to do to improve.

We know that everyone wants to do even better and we have suggested two things that we think will help.

- For your teachers to help more of you to reach higher levels in numeracy by the time that you leave the school.
- To provide some cover outside the nursery so these children can continue outdoor learning even when it is wet.

You can help by continuing to work hard! We are confident that you will continue to enjoy your school and we wish you well in the future.

With best wishes

Keith Sadler

Lead inspector