

Bedwell Primary School

Bedwell Crescent, Stevenage, Hertfordshire SG1 1NJ

Inspection dates

22–23 May 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The progress pupils currently make across the school is not consistently good, particularly in reading and mathematics.
- Pupils achieved less well in the key stage 2 tests in 2017 than pupils nationally in writing and mathematics, and significantly less well in reading.
- Writing and mathematics attainment at the end of Year 2 has been significantly below average for the last two years.
- Leaders and governors have not ensured that procedures to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment are effective enough.
- Governors do not hold leaders to account for the quality of the school's work and pupils' performance. They do not check how well policies and plans are implemented or the information on the school's website.
- Leadership of some subjects, such as history and geography, is not well developed. Consequently, pupils do not make good progress in these subjects.
- The quality of teaching is not consistently good. Often, staff do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve or do not match work to the needs of the pupils.
- Additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is not spent well enough to ensure that disadvantaged pupils do as well as they could. For the past two years, disadvantaged pupils' attainment has been significantly below that of other pupils nationally.
- Pupils do not attend as regularly as they should. Despite leaders' actions, attendance remains below average, and some pupils continue to have high levels of absence.

The school has the following strengths

- Bedwell Primary is a very caring and inclusive school. Pupils are proud of their school and behave well. They said that they feel happy and safe.
- Children make a good start to their learning in the early years. They make good progress from very low starting points in both the Nursery and Reception.
- The teaching of phonics is effective. As a result, the proportion of pupils reaching the national standard in the phonics screening check in recent years has increased and is now similar to the national average.
- Pupils enjoy the extra-curricular opportunities the school provides, such as school trips, clubs and sporting competitions.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management at all levels, including governance, by making sure that:
 - governors hold leaders rigorously to account to improve standards
 - governors regularly monitor the quality of education provided, including how well policies and plans are implemented, and receive accurate information about school performance
 - a systematic approach is in place to evaluate the school's strengths and weaknesses so that information from evaluation enables leaders, governors and staff to have an accurate view of the school
 - leadership of subjects, other than English and mathematics, is strengthened so that subject leaders can more fully support senior leaders to raise standards of work across the school
 - leaders monitor pupils' outcomes more effectively to ensure that all groups of pupils achieve well
 - leaders use information from effective monitoring of teaching to improve pupils' learning and ensure that pupils' progress, including the progress of disadvantaged pupils, is consistently good
 - leaders improve reading achievements for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Improve the quality of teaching to accelerate pupils' progress across the curriculum by ensuring that:
 - teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are consistently high
 - teachers use assessment information effectively to plan activities that are well matched and sufficiently challenging to pupils' needs and abilities, especially for lower-ability pupils and the most able
 - the teaching in mathematics provides pupils with increased opportunities to develop their mathematical reasoning skills
 - teachers provide regular opportunities to develop pupils' skills in comprehension, and their stamina and fluency in reading.
- Ensure that the actions leaders are taking to improve attendance have positive impact so that attendance is at least in line with the national averages and as few pupils as possible are frequently absent.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Since the last inspection, leaders' actions to improve the quality of teaching have not been fully effective throughout the school, so inconsistencies remain. Consequently, pupils receive an uneven quality of education and do not make the progress of which they are capable in key stages 1 and 2.
- Leaders are not systematic in the way they evaluate school effectiveness, which leads to an inaccurate view of how good the school is.
- The school's focus on developing the roles of senior and middle leaders has had some positive impact. For example, leadership of early years is good, and the achievement in phonics is strong. However, leadership of some subjects, such as history and geography, is not well developed. Senior leaders have not prioritised the development of subjects across the wider curriculum. Consequently, pupils do not make strong progress in many areas of the curriculum at both key stages.
- In September 2017, the school commissioned the local authority to complete an external review of the use of pupil premium funding. Leaders have already made improvements to the ways in which they monitor, review and evaluate the use of the pupil premium funding. Although there is an enhanced focus on identifying barriers to these pupils' learning, leaders do not use assessment information carefully enough to precisely meet the needs of disadvantaged pupils. As a result, disadvantaged pupils do not make consistently good progress across the school. Therefore, the gap in achievement between disadvantaged pupils and others nationally is not closing as quickly as it should.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are well supported. There is a clear overview of the needs of pupils and effective support in place to promote their progress, particularly to improve their communication skills. Leaders have a good overview of the support for these pupils, which is regularly reviewed. However, current school information shows that reading progress in key stage 2 for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is not yet good.
- The longstanding headteacher is retiring at the end of the summer term. She has created a caring team and ensured that staff are as equally passionate about the welfare of all pupils in their care. This approach underpins the ethos of this inclusive school.
- The new headteacher and deputy headteacher are currently members of the leadership team and are determined to continue to promote a caring ethos. They have a good understanding of the school's priorities and want to build on the strengths of the school.
- The curriculum is creatively designed and is enriched by a wide range of clubs and other activities. Pupils enjoy learning a range of subjects through themes, such as 'On Safari', which enables them to develop skills across the curriculum. Teachers plan educational visits that are linked to pupils' learning themes and invite visitors to the school to enhance pupils' learning. Pupils take part in clubs, such as science, forest school and drawing, as well as a variety of sports activities.

- Leaders, staff and pupils are united in their view that discrimination of any kind is not tolerated at their school. The curriculum is used well to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Leaders have well-thought-out plans to use the primary sports funding. This has helped to broaden the range of sports on offer and pupils' participation in sports, including competitive games. Pupils enjoy sport and are proud to represent their school at the competitions. In 2017, the school was awarded the 'Gold School Games Mark'.
- Most parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire, Parent View, would recommend the school to another parent. Several parents who spoke to the inspectors expressed their appreciation of the approachability of the staff and said that, if they need help, 'the school will help us', as 'there is always someone there if I need to talk to someone'.

Governance of the school

- Since the previous inspection, governors rightly agree that they have not been effective in their strategic roles. Minutes of meetings show that governors over time do not hold leaders sufficiently to account for the school's performance. Despite the limited information governors receive from leaders, they understand the school's strengths and weaknesses and have an accurate view of the school. However, they do not use this information to support or challenge the school. Consequently, standards have not improved quickly enough.
- Monitoring has not been rigorous enough to impact on pupil outcomes. While governors come into the school, there is no evidence of the impact of their visits, or of how the information gathered is used to challenge the school to do better. Governors have completed limited training to support their roles. The school website has not been checked and did not meet legal requirements. However, omissions were urgently addressed during the inspection, and put right.
- Recruitment of governors has been difficult. However, a new appointment brings valuable skills, such as knowledge of the local community and finance. Both governors spoken to during the inspection understand that they need to have higher expectations and are fully committed to raising standards. They welcome the opportunity to work with the new senior leadership in September.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Three senior leaders are trained as designated safeguarding leaders. This ensures that there is always an effective safeguarding leader available to staff should any concerns arise. Safeguarding leaders know their pupils and families extremely well.
- Safeguarding leads work very closely with parents and external agencies to make sure that pupils are safe and that their welfare is assured. Leaders are tenacious in their determination to ensure that pupils and their families receive the appropriate and timely support they need.
- Appropriate checks are made on all staff before they begin work at the school to

ensure that they are fit and proper to work with children.

- Staff are regularly trained in a wide range of safeguarding matters and risk assessment procedures. As a result, all staff know how to make a referral, and pupils know who to go to if they have a problem.
- Staff ensure that pupils are well taught about safety and have the skills to be independent and make the right choices to stay safe. For example, pupils described how they have names and numbers of people they trust on a hand shape, in case they need them.
- Parents who responded to Parent View agree that the school keeps their children safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not consistently good across the school. Although there is effective teaching over time in some year groups and classes, too much variability across the school means that pupils make uneven progress especially in reading and mathematics across both key stages.
- Some teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not high enough. Often, teachers do not make effective use of assessment information to ensure that the work they provide is suitable for different pupils in their classes, particularly the less able and most able. For example, the less able pupils over-rely on adult support when writing, and the most able pupils are given tasks in mathematics which are too easy, thus hindering their progress. The work in pupils' books shows that teachers' expectations for presentation and work quality are also variable.
- As a result of training and initiatives, there have been clear improvements in the teaching of writing. Most pupils are now making better progress. For example, current school information shows that, in Year 2, twice the number of pupils are at the expected level in writing compared to last year, and this proportion is closer to the national average.
- Pupils enjoy writing and can describe how their writing has improved. They use the variety of prompts on display to help them and said that the 'toolkits', which list features to include, tell them exactly what has to be in their writing. Visits have inspired writing too. For example, the recent trip to Knebworth House helped pupils to write ghost stories in an eerie setting.
- Pupils have opportunities to produce extended pieces of writing for a range of purposes, audiences and text types in all year groups. There is a clear sequence that builds on learning and provides opportunities to apply their understanding of grammar, punctuation and spelling. The increased focus on learning different stories and storytelling has greatly supported pupils' improvements in how they use sentences. As one pupil said, 'We use the story we have learned to write our own with a twist.'
- The teaching of phonics is a strength of the school. As a result, current school information shows that reading progress is good in key stage 1. Inspectors listened to pupils apply their phonics knowledge well to access higher-level reading books and the curriculum. The profile of reading is rising in the school through events, such as the 'Spooktacular' reading week and the high-quality reading corners in each class, and reading challenges are encouraging more reading at home. However, there is more to

do.

- Following some analysis, leaders have identified that pupils in key stage 2 often struggle to unpick a text and read between the lines. They 'give up' when reading longer texts and find it difficult to read a text accurately, quickly and with expression. Several teachers have recently taken part in training to improve pupils' reading comprehension, stamina and fluency. However, it is too early to see the impact of this initiative.
- Leaders have focused on improving reasoning skills in mathematics this year so that pupils are better able to explain their thinking when completing mathematical problems. However, inspection evidence indicates that teachers provide too few opportunities for pupils to practise their mathematical reasoning and problem-solving skills.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pastoral care is strong. Staff know pupils and their families well. They share the headteacher's commitment and determination to make sure the school is a 'safe haven' and that all pupils feel safe and are well cared for. Pupils can confidently recall how to keep themselves safe, including when accessing the internet. Parents agree, and one parent commented on how the school had 'gone above and beyond' to help their son.
- Pupils are a credit to the ways in which the school has nurtured and supported their social and emotional development. They are polite, kind, confident and welcoming.
- Pupils show tolerance and respect for one another and are aware of the need for rules and consequences. A display in the school hall celebrates diverse heritages and helps pupils to understand different cultures. Pupils develop kindness and consideration for those experiencing difficulties, for example by collecting clothes for the children in Syria. One pupil commented, 'Helping other people gives us a good feeling. It makes us feel proud.'
- Pupils said that bullying is rare and that staff deal with any incidents effectively. Through the curriculum and assemblies, pupils are able to identify the different types of bullying and know that this and all types of discrimination are not tolerated at their school.
- Improved use of the sports premium funding means that pupils have increased access to a range of sporting activities and events, both during and after the school day. This is valued by pupils, supports their self-esteem and enables them to learn how to keep themselves fit and healthy.
- Pupils are proud to accept the leadership opportunities provided for them. The school council is an effective means for pupils to share their ideas and give their opinions on school matters. For example, pupils select fundraising activities, which has enabled them to buy new play equipment for breaktimes.
- Pupils do not attend school as well as they should, and this has an impact on their

learning. Attendance has declined since the previous inspection. Leaders have recently introduced a variety of approaches to support pupils and their parents in achieving good attendance. A range of incentives to raise attendance is well received by pupils. However, it is too early to see the impact of this, and attendance continues to be below the national average. In addition, too many pupils are regularly absent. School leaders acknowledge that current attendance could be further improved.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils conduct themselves well around the school. They play cooperatively at breaktimes and enjoy each other's company.
- Pupils said that behaviour is good. They are proud to explain what is expected of them and the associated rewards and sanctions. Pupils said that they feel that the school's use of the behaviour monitoring system is fair. They recognise how the very small number of pupils who find good behaviour more difficult are helped to improve through the support they receive from adults. Most parents who responded to Parent View agree that the school makes sure that pupils are well behaved.
- School records demonstrate that behavioural incidences are reported and recorded. Leaders analyse this information to identify trends and help to improve behaviour even further.
- Pupils are keen to learn and impress their teachers. Attitudes to learning are generally positive. This is particularly so where learning is well matched to pupils' needs, captures their imagination and engages them. Occasionally, when this is not so, a few pupils lose focus and low-level disruption occurs. Where teachers' expectations are not as high, presentation and quality of work are not as good.
- Pupils are happy and enjoy school, as they say it 'gives us different experiences' and 'helps us to know more than we did before'.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Results at the end of key stage 2, in 2017, were not good and showed a decline from the good performance of pupils in 2016. Pupils left the school in 2017 with attainment that was below the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. Results in reading were particularly weak and especially so for disadvantaged pupils.
- In 2016 and 2017, attainment in Year 2 was below the average in reading and mathematics and significantly below in writing, particularly for disadvantaged pupils. From their starting points, some pupils did not make the progress they should have done.
- Leaders have focused on raising attainment and accelerating progress in reading, writing and mathematics across the school for all pupils. Current school information shows that attainment and rates of progress from different starting points are improving in some year groups in reading, writing and mathematics. While many pupils are making good progress, this is not consistent across the school for all, especially across key stage 2.
- Pupils do not make consistently good progress in other subjects, such as history or

geography. Subject leaders are not ensuring that teaching and learning are well enough developed across the school.

- A large proportion of pupils in the school are disadvantaged. In recent years, disadvantaged pupils have not made the progress that they should. Current information suggests that disadvantaged pupils make similar progress to that of their peers in school, which is not consistently good. Leaders have not used assessment information carefully enough to provide tailored intervention to meet the needs of disadvantaged pupils.
- Phonics is now a strength of the school. It was identified as an area for development at the previous inspection. As a result of the action taken by leaders to improve the teaching of phonics, such as the introduction of a structured programme, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard at the end of Year 1 has improved markedly since 2014 and is now similar to the national average.
- Pupils use phonics skills well for writing. Leaders' focus on improving the quality of phonics teaching has had a positive effect on pupils' reading and writing, particularly for pupils in key stage 1. Current school information demonstrates that reading and writing progress is largely good in key stage 1, and attainment outcomes have risen considerably from last year.
- Pupils who read with inspectors used phonics accurately and could talk confidently about their book. They enjoy reading and have appreciated the visits by authors to the school. They are particularly impressed with the new books the school has purchased. Strategies to improve pupils' outcomes in reading, such as the new approaches to group reading, are at an early stage of implementation so have not had enough impact yet on developing fluency and comprehension.

Early years provision

Good

- Children enter the school with skills and abilities that are significantly lower than is typical for their age, especially in their language, numeracy and social skills. Although the proportion of children achieving a good level of development at the end of the early years is not yet in line with the national average, it has been steadily increasing in recent years. Children are, therefore, better prepared than previously to move into key stage 1.
- Leadership of early years is good. High aspirations and enthusiasm support the determination that all children should make good or better progress. Leaders have a clear and accurate picture of the strengths and areas for development in the provision.
- Because of effective teaching, children make good progress from their starting points. Staff work well together to share ideas and planning, which enables continuity. They are skilled in making accurate assessments of children's progress. They use assessment information effectively to identify gaps in children's understanding and to adapt the curriculum accordingly. For example, new approaches to develop children's ability to tell stories have been introduced. As a result, children's vocabulary has increased alongside their engagement with early writing skills.
- Staff have a good understanding of each child's different social and emotional needs.

Relationships are warm and caring, and this helps children to feel confident, happy and safe. Children behave well and play independently as well as with others.

- The environment is vibrant and well organised. Activities are carefully designed to engage, enthuse and challenge children's thinking and language skills. Children maintain their attention well, and adults intervene as appropriate when an activity requires more perseverance. For example, one child had difficulty when cutting and was ready to give up; however, adult support enabled him to complete the task.
- Children develop their language skills well through high-level interaction with adults, effective support from adults when required and immersion in imaginative play. Adults use a range of questions to extend children's learning and help children to use talk to explore the world around them.
- Children experience the transition from Nursery to Reception and then into Year 1 in a very supported way through visits during the summer term.
- Communication with parents and other providers is effective. Parents are actively encouraged to come into school to support their child's learning. An increasing number of parents attend the regular 'stay and play' sessions, and a large proportion of parents respond to their children's learning through the children's online learning journals.
- Leaders ensure that statutory welfare requirements are met and that child protection procedures are consistently adhered to.

School details

Unique reference number	117200
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10053878

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	300
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Brian Jones
Headteacher	Judith Moore
Telephone number	01438 351198
Website	www.bedwell.herts.sch.uk
Email address	head@bedwell.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	3 December 2014

Information about this school

- This is a larger than average-sized primary school with a part-time Nursery.
- The large majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language is about average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is more than twice the national average.
- Nearly half of the pupils are supported through pupil premium funding. This is well above the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

- A breakfast club and an after-school club are provided by the school.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been several staff changes. The current headteacher is due to retire in the summer term and a new senior leadership team will start in September.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in every class. Some observations were undertaken jointly with school leaders.
- The inspection team looked through a wide range of pupils' work across the curriculum with leaders and listened to pupils read.
- Inspectors held meetings with leaders to review provision in a range of areas, including the curriculum; SEN and/or disabilities; pupil premium funding; pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare; and safeguarding.
- Inspectors considered a range of documentation, including the school's development plan and governors' minutes.
- Members of the inspection team observed pupils' behaviour at playtimes and lunchtimes, when pupils were moving in and around the school, and during lessons.
- To ascertain the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors reviewed a range of documents. Documents included the single central record, policies and procedures, training certificates and risk assessments.
- Inspectors took account of all the responses to Ofsted questionnaires. These included 52 from pupils in Years 5 and 6, 13 from staff and 17 from parents on Parent View. Twenty parents also submitted written comments using the Ofsted free text service. In addition, inspectors spoke to parents at the beginning of the school day.
- Throughout the inspection, inspectors spoke with pupils and held a separate meeting with the school council. Inspectors also met with a selection of pupils who are eligible for pupil premium funding.
- The lead inspector met with two governors, which included the chair of governors, and a representative from the local authority.

Inspection team

Rachel Welch, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Simon Harbrow	Ofsted Inspector
Angela Savill	Ofsted Inspector

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