

Meersbrook Bank Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	107002
Local authority	Sheffield
Inspection number	377510
Inspection dates	25–26 January 2012
Lead inspector	Stephen Fisher

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 of pupils on the school roll	234
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rob Stephens
Headteacher	Rachel Edwards
Date of previous school inspection	3 December 2008
School address	Derbyshire Lane Sheffield S8 9EH
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Introduction

Inspection team

Stephen Fisher
Keith Massett

Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors observed 19 lessons taught by 10 teachers, including two joint lesson observations with school leaders. The inspectors held meetings with members of the governing body, staff and pupils. The inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a range of school policies and documentation relating to safeguarding and strategic planning. They looked at examples of pupils' work, pupil progress data and monitoring records, and took account of the information on the school website. The inspectors scrutinised the 156 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, as well as questionnaires from pupils and staff. Eight responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) were available to assist in planning the inspection.

Information about the school

Meersbrook Bank is an average-sized primary school. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly average. The percentage of pupils on the school's special educational needs register supported at school action is low. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is high. The school has achieved Artsmark Gold and was the first in Sheffield to receive the 'Investors in Diversity' award. The school has met government floor standards. These are minimum standards set for pupils' attainment and progress.

The head of school is supported by an executive headteacher for half a day each week. The governing body intends to appoint a permanent headteacher from September 2012.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall Effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- This is a good school. With few exceptions, pupils, parents and carers express very positive views about the education it provides. One parent summed the school up very accurately by writing ‘the warmth and friendliness that exudes from the place is a joy to behold.’
- Pupil achievement is good. From starting points in the Nursery class that are in line with age-related expectations, pupils in each key stage make good progress. Attainment at the end of Year 6 has been broadly average for the last three years but under the school’s new leadership team, rates of progress have improved significantly and current attainment is above average.
- Teaching is good in each key stage. There is a strong and successful focus on reading. While the teaching of writing is bringing about steady improvement in attainment, there is some inconsistency, and as a result, improvement in writing is not as rapid as in reading. Marking is thorough. Pupils are praised for their achievements and given pointers for further improvement, though these are not consistently followed up to ensure that the improvements are made.
- Pupils’ behaviour is good and they say that they feel very safe in school. They enjoy their lessons and the enrichment activities that the school provides. They say that misbehaviour is rare and that any is dealt with effectively by their teachers. There are good procedures in place for dealing with pupils who have difficulty in managing their own behaviour.
- Leadership and management are good. Senior and middle leaders know the school’s strengths and areas for development well. They have an ambitious vision for the school and effective systems are in place for bringing about further improvement. Governing body members are knowledgeable and actively involved in the life of the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' attainment in writing throughout the school by ensuring that teachers consistently:
 - provide daily opportunities for pupils to develop their mark making and writing skills in the Early Years Foundation Stage
 - use a wider range of teaching strategies in Key Stages 1 and 2, such as modelled and guided writing
 - give pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 clear guidance and support to enable them to achieve their targets.

- Improve pupils' attainment in English and mathematics by:
 - ensuring that teachers give pupils regular and constructive feedback, both orally and through marking, and expect them to respond to the feedback.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Early Years Foundation Stage provision has been improved significantly since the last inspection, particularly the facilities for outdoor learning, which are used well and enjoyed by the Nursery and Reception pupils. The curriculum for the Early Years Foundation Stage pupils meets their needs well. They are enthusiastic learners and like the activities focused around stories such as *The Gingerbread Man* and *Bear Hunt*. They make good progress in their personal and social development and in the development of their early reading skills, though opportunities for pupils to develop their mark making and writing skills are not as well developed. There is a systematic approach to the teaching of reading throughout the school. This leads to pupils making good progress in each key stage and results in above average attainment in reading by the end of Key Stage 1 and by the end of Key Stage 2.

Pupils make good progress in the development of their writing skills, which are above average by the end of Key Stage 2. Pupils sustain concentration and work enthusiastically in their literacy lessons and the written work in pupils' books is well presented. Pupils write fluently for a range of purposes and attainment in writing is good overall, though rates of progress vary across year groups. The full range of punctuation is used, syntax is accurate, the main purpose of the writing is clear and vocabulary is chosen for effect. Pupils' attainment in mathematics is above average and they make good progress by the end of Key Stage 2. They work accurately and demonstrate good written calculation skills, though some are less confident and adept in mental calculation. Pupils achieve well in the development of their information and communication technology skills. For example, in a Year 5 lesson linked to their writing about an alien breaking into their classroom, they confidently used music software to add layers of sound and voices to a 'Podcast' for presentation to the Year 2 pupils.

As a result of careful monitoring and good support, the school ensures that there are no noticeable gaps in the performance of different groups of pupils. Pupils with

special educational needs and those who are disabled along with looked after children make good progress as a result of well-targeted support. The school succeeds in enabling each pupil to thrive. This is endorsed by the comments from parents and carers via the questionnaire. There was a very high rate of return, with the vast majority of responses indicating that parents and carers are happy with their children's progress.

Quality of teaching

Most lessons are planned well and ensure that the needs of pupils of all abilities are met. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and work is challenging. Teachers' enthusiasm motivates pupils effectively, as in a lesson in the nursery, when pupils joined their teacher on a 'bear hunt' with much laughter as they travelled around the outdoor learning area suggesting mud, a river, a snowstorm and a forest that they might travel through. There is consistent use of success criteria in lessons so that pupils know what is expected of them. Support staff are deployed well and are particularly effective in support of pupils with special educational needs and with groups of the more-able pupils; as in a Year 3 science investigation about electrical conductors and insulators and in a Year 6 mathematics lesson where pupils were calculating percentage increases when the areas of two-dimensional shapes were enlarged. Teachers give pupils good oral and written advice about how to improve their work, though this is not consistently followed up by teachers to ensure that the improvements are made.

Teachers maintain very positive relationships with pupils and provide stimulating and enjoyable activities for them. In the best lessons, instructions are clear, pupils are encouraged to work practically in groups and the use of technical vocabulary is emphasised, as in a Year 4 mathematics lesson about the properties of three-dimensional shapes. There is a strong emphasis on developing pupils' ability to work cooperatively and independently. There is less consistent use of teacher guiding and modelling the development of writing skills or the use of 'mini-plenaries' within lessons to look at pupils' work in progress, find out how well they are doing, ensure that they understand their tasks and help them to move forward.

Teachers promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Staff value and respect pupils and expect them to value and respect each other. Creativity and cultural awareness are promoted effectively in the curriculum through, for example, visits from writers, participation in music lessons and events, arts and dance activities and the study of languages and cultures from around the world. Parents and carers feel that their children are taught well, emphasised by the significantly high percentage who state that they would recommend the school to another parent.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The vast majority of parents and carers who responded to the parent questionnaires agreed that there is a good standard of behaviour at the school. A few expressed concerns about behaviour in lessons and how the school deals with any cases of bullying. The behaviour seen during the inspection in lessons, in the dining room, on the play areas and around the school was good and pupils told the inspectors that

what they saw was typical. The school has effective procedures for dealing with all forms of bullying. Incidents of inappropriate behaviour are reducing and pupils said that if any misbehaviour occurred it was dealt with properly. Pupils are polite and respectful and those of different backgrounds get on well together in lessons and at play times.

Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep safe and express confidence in the adults who care for them. They say that they know what to do if they encounter a problem. Their enjoyment of and appreciation for their school is indicated by their high attendance.

Leadership and management

The school has improved considerably since its last inspection. Good provision for the more-able pupils means that more of them are attaining at the higher National Curriculum levels. The most significant improvement has seen the outdoor provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage transformed to become an enticing, stimulating and well used learning environment for the Nursery and Reception pupils.

In addition, the actions of senior and middle leaders, ably supported by the governing body, have brought about improvements in teaching and sustained improvement in pupils' reading, writing and numeracy attainment. The school has a good system for monitoring and tracking pupils' progress which helps school leaders to ensure that all pupils make good progress and that any who are at risk of falling behind receive appropriate support.

The curriculum promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. The school is very inclusive. It promotes equality of opportunity effectively and has good procedures for tackling any form of discrimination. Safeguarding arrangements are good overall.

In 2010, the governing body decided to appoint the deputy headteacher as acting head of school, with a half-time executive headteacher, both for a fixed period of two years. This leadership model has been very effective. The executive headteacher now works at the school for only half a day each week and the governing body's intention to appoint a permanent headteacher from September 2012 is on schedule. The school's sharply focused and accurate evaluation of its strengths and areas for development has given it a good understanding of where and how it can improve further and it has ambitious and well thought out plans to realise this improvement. As such, the school has a good capacity to improve.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



27 January 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Meersbrook Bank Primary School, Sheffield, S8 9EH

Thank you very much for the warm and friendly welcome you gave the inspectors when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed our visit very much and it was a pleasure to meet you all. We came to evaluate how well the school is performing. In order to help us make our judgements it was important for us to be able to hear your views and we would like to thank you for your contributions. We were impressed by the quality of your conversations and the chats around the table in the dining room at lunchtimes were particularly helpful.

Meersbrook Bank Primary School is a good school. You told us that you like your school, which must be one of the main reasons why your attendance is so high. We were pleased to hear from your parents that most of them have a good opinion of the school. The staff and governors take good care of you and help you to learn and develop your skills well. They have a strong ambition to make the school even better and clear plans for doing so. We have identified two things to help this process along. We have asked the staff and governors to:

- improve your writing by planning activities that more effectively build on your skills and by giving you clear guidance about how to make it better
- improve your standards in English and mathematics by ensuring that when your teachers have marked your work and talked to you about it, they make sure that you have time to, and that you do improve it.

We hope that this helps you, keep up the good work!

Yours sincerely,

Stephen Fisher
Lead Inspector

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