

Mereside Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135788
Local Authority	Shropshire
Inspection number	360753
Inspection dates	17–18 January 2011
Reporting inspector	David Driscoll

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	290
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Pat Swain
Headteacher	Wanda Wheeler
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors who observed 22 lessons taught by 11 teachers. They held meetings with groups of pupils, parents and carers, staff and members of the governing body. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at records of pupils' progress and attendance, the school's development plan, records of checks on teaching and documents relating to the safeguarding of pupils. They also analysed responses to questionnaires completed by staff, pupils and 72 parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How well teaching meets the needs of boys so they are able to make as much progress as girls, especially in writing
- How effective are systems for reducing any variations in the quality of teaching across year groups and classes.
- How effective are arrangements for sex education, including the extent to which they meet statutory requirements.

Information about the school

This school is larger than average. The very large majority of pupils come from a White British background. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is average, although the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is above average. The school opened in September 2009 following the amalgamation of separate infant and junior schools. Only four of the teachers from the original schools remain, one of whom is the headteacher. A large building project, still in progress during the inspection, has caused classes to be moved from their usual classrooms on several occasions. There is a before-school and after-school club, a nursery and provision for pre-school children on the same site, but these are privately managed and subject to a separate inspection.

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: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

The school provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. The school's senior leaders concentrated on ensuring that all the required policies and procedures were in place for the school to run smoothly after its opening, and rightly prioritised dealing with areas of weakness, such as behaviour and boys' progress in writing. Most of the new systems are still embedding, but there are clear signs of improvement. Attendance, for example, has improved significantly and is now above average. Pupils' behaviour was a concern when the school opened, but pupils and staff say it has improved considerably as the behaviour and other pastoral care policies are implemented more consistently across the school. Behaviour, both in and out of lessons, is now satisfactory. New curriculum initiatives, such as the design and technology based project on vehicles, are making the curriculum more relevant and interesting for pupils.

The school has satisfactory capacity for further improvement. The evaluation carried out by the senior staff is accurate and identifies clearly the main priorities for improvement. Subject coordinators and members of the governing body are well informed about the school's strengths and weaknesses, but have not played a significant role in monitoring its effectiveness. There are plans to improve the role played by subject coordinators, who have themselves identified appropriate priorities in their own action plans. The school's senior leaders track pupils' progress well in reading, writing and mathematics. They analyse the results to provide a clear picture of the progress of different groups and individuals. However, the analysis is not used to identify differences in the progress made by different classes so that checks on teaching can be targeted at finding out why some classes do better than others.

Pupils' attainment on leaving Year 6 is above average. Most outcomes for pupils are satisfactory, including the progress they make. The picture in the Reception class is different. Here, children settle very quickly into the welcoming environment. They experience an exciting curriculum and are taught well, so they make good progress. Teaching in the rest of the school is satisfactory. Lessons are consistently planned in great detail in order to challenge pupils. However, sometimes the plans are not put into practice. This leads to the pace of learning slowing during different phases of a lesson, when some pupils find the work or questions too easy and they lose interest in the topic. Groups working directly under the supervision of a teacher or teaching assistant make good progress, but other groups are sometimes slow to get started and do not maintain their concentration on the work in hand. This is particularly true of boys, who are more easily distracted. The impact of this is evident in their overall progress, which is slightly slower than that of the girls.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure pupils make consistently good progress by:
 - making sure all phases of a lesson challenge and engage pupils
 - making certain that pupils, especially boys, who are not directly supervised get straight down to work and concentrate fully for the duration of the task.
- By July 2012 increase to 70% the proportion of lessons taught to a good or better standard by making better use of data to target lesson observations in order to gain a more accurate picture of the strengths and weaknesses in the teaching of individual classes.
- Ensure that subject coordinators and members of the governing body are fully involved in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

The vast majority of pupils enjoy and feel safe in the school. They have confidence in teachers and teaching assistants to deal with any concerns they may have. Some play can be a bit rough, and pupils feel that their complaints are not always taken seriously by some lunchtime supervisors. Behaviour around the corridors is usually good. Incidents of poor behaviour are very rare in lessons, but at any one time there are usually two or three pupils who are not paying attention to their work or the teacher. Pupils demonstrate their good capacity for reflection on spiritual matters in assemblies and lessons. They talk confidently about the moral issues relating to the care of the environment. They have a sound knowledge of other cultures.

Children join the Reception class with skills and knowledge that are typical for their age. They make good progress there and join Year 1 with above average levels of attainment. Most pupils look forward to coming to school and arrive at lessons ready to learn. In the lessons observed by inspectors, pupils enjoyed and persevered well with tasks that made them think hard. Their learning slowed when they found the work too easy or when they had to listen to the teacher without being actively engaged by having to answer questions. In these instances, some pupils, usually boys, allowed their concentration to wander. Nevertheless, they were never disruptive. Girls in these situations would often stay focussed or get on by themselves. When similar work was given to the whole class, pupils of middle ability made satisfactory progress because the work was set at their level of ability. Lower ability pupils and those with special educational needs also made satisfactory progress because they were supported by their teaching assistants. Some higher ability pupils, however, raced through the work and had to wait for others to catch up. Those pupils with a statement of special educational needs that related to their attitudes were well supported by their teaching assistants in successfully managing their own behaviour.

All groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, achieve satisfactorily. Boys' progress in writing has been slower than that of girls in the recent past. However, the gap is now closing as the school's actions to improve boys' progress have proved successful.

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Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	3
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Pupils like and get on well with their teachers. They respect their teachers' good knowledge of the subjects they teach. Pupils quickly respond to teachers' reminders to get on with their work, although their inattention is not always spotted. Most other aspects of teaching vary from lesson to lesson. In some, for example, pupils get straight down to work on a starter activity that quickly sets the scene for the lesson and introduces any new concepts. In others, pupils have to wait for too long before moving to a task that is matched to their individual abilities. Homework is set and marked assiduously in most classes, especially in Years 1 and 2, but in the odd class some weeks are missed or pupils do not receive feedback on the work. Classwork is marked regularly, but some pupils are not clear about the next steps they need to take in order to improve their work.

The curriculum is suitably broad and balanced, with a good range of clubs and activities that are enjoyed by the pupils. Provision for pupils' personal and social education, including sex education, is satisfactory and pupils have a sound knowledge of each of the topics covered. The school has recently introduced some themed topics which are used to teach literacy and numeracy skills in context. These have proved very successful in motivating boys to write and engaging pupils more actively in their learning.

Many of the school's procedures for providing care, support and guidance are still embedding. All were newly drawn up and implemented when the school opened, and the senior staff have been adjusting them in the light of experience. Some, such as the

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actions to improve attendance and the arrangements to support children joining the reception class are working well, while others are satisfactory, but improving.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

How effective are leadership and management?

The school runs smoothly on a day to day basis because procedures are clear and understood by staff. The headteacher has a good vision for the school's future which is shared by all staff and morale is strong. Targets set for the school's performance are challenging but were not met in 2010. Much of the push for improvement comes from the headteacher and senior staff, with other managers and members of the governing body yet to play a full part in driving the school forward. Checks on teaching accurately identify the main strengths and weaknesses, and the school's main priorities for improvement are well founded and supported by increasingly effective plans of action. Members of the governing body have a good understanding of what needs to be done to improve the school but rely on the headteacher for much of their information about its performance.

Provision for community cohesion is satisfactory. The school has, understandably, concentrated on developing its own cohesive community and is already implementing plans to develop pupils' understanding of cultures other than their own, both within this country and internationally. With respect to ensuring equality, a strong stance is taken on tackling any discrimination. Gaps in the progress of different classes still exist, but those between boys and girls are closing swiftly. Arrangements for safeguarding meet requirements.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children get off to good start in the Reception class. They quickly make friends and settle into routines in a safe and secure environment. The good opportunities children are given to plan their own activities help them to develop their self-confidence and enjoyment of learning through play. They have lots of opportunities to move freely between the indoor and outdoor areas as they see fit. This helps them to sustain interest in their activities for extended periods. Most activities are very well matched to the children's abilities because staff take excellent account of children's own views when planning tasks. Progress in learning to read and write is particularly good because staff plan this aspect of work systematically in order to build, lesson by lesson, on what children can already do. Assessments are accurate and comprehensive but do not always identify what the next steps in learning should be for the most able children in aspects other than reading and writing. While attainment is above average on leaving the Reception class, the proportions who reach the very highest levels are slightly below the national picture. The learning environment is well resourced, and good use is made of information and communication technology to provide exciting learning opportunities. The manager has an ambitious vision for the future, backed up by an accurate idea of the priorities for improvement. These are supported by clear plans of actions, although it is not always as clear what impact on the children is expected as a result of their implementation. Links with parents and carers are strong, and they feel fully informed about their children's education.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers are generally happy with the education provided by the school and hold views that are similar to the inspection findings. Parents and carers are very positive about the Reception class and how much their children enjoy coming to school. They also feel strongly that the school keeps their children safe. Some parents and carers feel that the school is not doing enough to help them in supporting their children's learning. In particular, they complain about variation in the adherence to the homework policy and completion of the reading diaries. Inspectors discussed this matter with the headteacher, then checked homework books and reading diaries. They found that, although homework arrangements have improved over recent weeks, some inconsistencies remain. The school acknowledged the inconsistencies and have already taken steps to resolve this issue in the year groups affected. Parents and carers were also concerned about the way poor behaviour is managed. Inspectors examined records of incidents and spoke to pupils themselves about this. All evidence pointed to significant examples of poor behaviour when the school first opened; these have been virtually eliminated as the school's systems for behaviour management have been implemented more consistently.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Mereside Church of England Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 72 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 290 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	35	49	35	49	2	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	35	49	32	44	4	6	1	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	17	24	41	57	10	14	2	3
My child is making enough progress at this school	21	29	35	49	10	14	2	3
The teaching is good at this school	24	33	37	51	5	7	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	21	29	34	47	13	18	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	18	25	43	60	9	13	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	15	21	43	60	6	8	2	3
The school meets my child's particular needs	19	26	38	53	12	17	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	14	19	36	50	9	13	6	8
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	17	24	38	53	12	17	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	23	32	29	40	9	13	5	7
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	27	38	31	43	9	13	3	4

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on 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 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

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.



19 January 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Mereside Church of England Primary School, Shrewsbury, SY2 6LE

Many thanks for all the help you gave us when we visited your school. You were very polite and we were impressed by how well you spoke about your school.

We found that you are getting a satisfactory education. As you know, your school has only been open a short time and everyone is still getting used to the rules and learning what works best for you. Some things are already working well. Children in the Reception class, for example, learn more quickly than we often see. You are coming to school more often, so your attendance is now above average. Well done! Some of you told us that you find the work a bit easy at times or that you get a bit bored with some of the tasks. We have asked your teachers to make sure that you are always given work that you find interesting and which is difficult enough to really make you think. Some of the boys do not always concentrate when the teacher is not looking, so we have asked the teachers to make sure you are always working as hard as possible. You can help by not letting your minds wander and always working as hard as you can.

Your school has made steady progress since it opened. You told us how much behaviour has improved, for example, and how much you enjoyed the 'vehicles' project. Your headteacher and other senior staff have a clear picture of what needs to be done to make the school a better place to be. They keep a close eye on your progress in reading, writing and mathematics, and analyse the results well. We have suggested that they use this analysis to help them identify what works well in the teaching and what needs improving, so that you can all make good progress. We have also asked other staff and members of the governing body to give them more help in doing this.

With all best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

David Driscoll
Lead inspector

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