

The Meadows School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110258
Local Authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	356713
Inspection dates	18–19 January 2011
Reporting inspector	Hugh Protherough

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	143
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Michael Appleyard
Headteacher	Phyllis Carr
Date of previous school inspection	12 June 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. They observed a total of 15 lessons and seven teachers. They analysed the school's work, including samples of pupils' work, documents such as the school improvement plan, curriculum and lesson planning, and the tracking of pupil progress. They analysed the responses from 49 parent and carer questionnaires as well as those from staff and pupils. Inspectors met with parents and carers, members of the governing body and staff. In addition to informal conversations in lessons, they held meetings with the school council and a group of pupils from Year 6.

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

- The extent to which the school's approaches to supporting pupils' individual needs and abilities are improving their well-being, progress and achievement, especially in raising and developing their core skills in literacy and numeracy.
- How far teachers plan successfully for the wide range of pupils' abilities and ensure oral and written feedback engages and motivates them to improve their work.
- Whether senior and middle leaders can demonstrate the impact of their work on improving provision and pupil outcomes.

Information about the school

The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school and serves a community with a significant number of transient families. As a result, the proportion of pupils arriving and leaving school during the course of each year is much greater than average. The largest group of pupils continues to be of White British heritage but the range of other groups has continued to increase and is slightly above the national average. Sizeable groups include pupils from Black British Caribbean and Mixed, White and Black Caribbean heritages. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or learning disabilities continues to be well above the national average, as is the proportion with a statement of special educational needs. This includes pupils with specific learning difficulties, speech and language needs and emotional and behavioural difficulties. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average.

The school provides care clubs before and after school each day and took over the management of the pre-school class in September 2010.

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****2**

Main findings

The school provides a satisfactory quality of education. There are areas of significant strength, such as the good care, guidance and support provided for pupils. In particular, the arrangements for the welcome and induction of the large number of transient families and vulnerable pupils are excellent. They are effective because staff at all levels share a common vision and work closely to ensure consistent approaches to developing good relationships with the pupils and a positive ethos for learning.

By the end of Year 6, the profile of pupils' attainment is low and the measurement of their progress highly complex because cohorts are small and a significant proportion of the school population changes frequently. Last year, less than a half of Year 6 had attended this school from Reception, and low attainment in the national tests was the result of the majority of pupils having special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders maintain detailed records and effectively analyse the progress of individuals and groups. School data and the inspectors' analysis of pupils' work show that pupils' current progress is good and improving securely and strongly throughout the school. Well-managed provision and effective support for the many pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities result in these pupils making good progress.

Pupils of all backgrounds enjoy school and make the most of what is on offer. A rich variety of learning experiences is provided in and beyond the classroom. As a result, pupils are engaged in their learning and behave well. Teaching is effective because staff have high expectations and set a brisk pace to learning. They plan assiduously and ensure a close match of task to individual abilities, especially in English and mathematics. The effective support of teaching assistants makes a strong contribution to pupils' good progress.

Since the last inspection the school has improved pupils' speaking and listening skills and successfully developed the outside environment for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Attendance has improved, but there remain a small minority of families who struggle to get their children to school promptly each day. Senior leaders and members of the governing body have a good oversight of the work of the school and mostly make accurate evaluation of its performance. Changes in staff deployment and the establishment of common approaches to classroom management are paying dividends. Staff are held to account so that there is a shared appreciation of individual pupil progress and well-judged provision plans to support those that are falling behind. As a result, attainment is starting to rise, giving the school a good capacity to improve further.

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?

- Embed improved learning and progress so that pupils' attainment in Year 6 in English and mathematics reaches average levels by June 2012. A good result for those Year 5 pupils currently at the school would be for 83% to reach Level 4 and 38% Level 5 in the national tests of 2012.
- Reduce the amount of unauthorised absence by working with those families who struggle to get their children to school. For instance by:
 - emphasising the importance of punctuality at school and in the world of work
 - providing them with evidence of the negative impact of lateness and repeated absence on their children's learning, progress and attainment, and ultimately their life chances.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Positive attitudes to learning are evident in all classes and pupils of all backgrounds and abilities get on well together to make the most of the interesting learning opportunities provided by staff. Behaviour is good and pupils offer a polite and friendly reception to visitors. Pupils say they feel safe, secure and valued by the adults at the school. The way that the school community successfully includes and manages vulnerable pupils and those with significant learning, medical and behavioural needs is highly effective.

Inspectors' analysis of pupils' work confirms that, in comparison with the national picture, attainment in English and mathematics is low. However, there is compelling evidence that the school's strategies to improve pupils' reading, writing and mathematics are accelerating progress. As a result, pupils' overall achievement is satisfactory. A wide range of provision, such as one-to-one tuition and speech and language groups, is targeted precisely to meet the needs of individuals and groups. The impact of this provision is most evident for those pupils who have been at the school from the age of four. Many of the current Year 6 pupils have made good gains from their starting points and an increasing number of them are reaching the nationally expected level. The school's well-developed tracking means that staff can explain case by case the background of those who have made good progress, as well as what is being done for those who need to catch up.

Pupils' enjoyment of learning is palpable. The challenge of mastering positional language engaged the wholehearted concentration of Year 1 because the teacher enabled the pupils to work practically. Her modelling of language was soon picked up by the pupils so that they too could give each other instructions to locate different coloured cubes. By Year 6, pupils are constructing written arguments about subjects such as homework that demonstrate the impact of the school's positive actions to improve speaking and listening. Conversations with pupils show that most are confident in their achievements and their work in subjects such as science, information and communication technology and art reflects this sense of pleasure and growing success.

Pupils have a good appreciation of what it means to lead a healthy lifestyle and talk knowledgeably about the importance of diet and exercise. The school has worked successfully to ensure that despite the challenge of adverse weather and swine flu, attendance has improved steadily from the low levels recorded two years ago. Even so,

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the persistent absence of a few pupils and the casual attitude to punctuality displayed by a few families continue to be cause for concern.

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	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
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	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

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?

The great majority of pupils make the most of what is on offer at school because they trust the adults who work and care for them. Thorough induction arrangements support pupils arriving at the school mid-way through the year and especially those who may have a troubled past or significant special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school has also invested significantly in extended provision. For instance, the breakfast club ensures all pupils start the day having had something to eat and drink. Additional adults, such as well-trained teaching assistants, make a significant impact, supporting learning in classrooms and working effectively with vulnerable individuals and small groups around the school. The school continues to work hard with a few families to improve their children's attendance.

Teachers plan thoroughly to address pupils' wide-ranging needs and engage them in learning. Their classroom management skills and subject knowledge are secure and, as a result, relationships between pupils and staff are extremely positive. Lessons are often enlivened by practical activities and a good variety of resources that enhance pupils' understanding. The frequent use of 'talk partners' supports the development of pupils' speaking and listening effectively. Teachers' high expectations for neat presentation are

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evident in pupils' books and folders and their feedback to pupils is positive and encouraging. In most classes it is evident that pupils know the levels at which they are working and what to do to improve. In addition, the teachers' questioning refers pupils to their targets and marking reinforces this. However, recent changes to marking policy are not yet embedded consistently in all classes.

The school's curriculum provides effective opportunities for learning and is enriched by a good range of additional activities within and beyond the school day. Opportunities for pupils to practise and apply the core skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology across the curriculum are developing well. Staff are adept at ensuring that the curriculum is adjusted to meet the needs of pupils and especially for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. However, inspectors' analysis of pupils' work shows that occasionally in subjects such as science, history and geography, work is not always as well matched to pupils' abilities as it is in English and mathematics.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Approaches to monitoring the work of the school are rigorous and clearly linked to the assessment of pupils' progress and attainment. As a result, morale is high and staff at all levels are strongly committed to the ambition and drive to ensure the best possible outcomes for pupils.

Subject leaders demonstrate a strong sense of accountability for what is happening in their particular areas of responsibility. In English and mathematics, there is good oversight of recent initiatives to improve teaching. The assessment tracking system enables senior leaders to identify with precision the achievements of each pupil. As a result, ambitious targets for individuals and groups systematically inform the review of pupils' progress and the performance management of staff. The effective inclusion of pupils from a wide variety of heritages, including many whose circumstances make them vulnerable or with special educational needs and/or disabilities, also reflects the school's effective promotion of equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination.

The school adopts robust approaches to all aspects of risk assessment and the safeguarding of pupils. The headteacher and staff work very productively with other agencies, such as social services, the police and health professionals, to tackle the specific needs of individual pupils and their families. The school is a welcoming and cohesive community. Pupils get on well together and effective plans promote engagement with other schools locally and beyond. This includes the development of wider international

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links. Pupils speak knowledgeably and sensitively about their own community and show good appreciation of the social and cultural diversity of the United Kingdom.

The governing body fulfils its statutory responsibilities and is regularly involved in the life of the school. It works well with staff in determining school priorities and has correctly focused on the need to raise attainment and improve attendance. There has been important investment in staffing and in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the consequent budget deficit is being successfully reduced. The views of parents and carers are canvassed on a regular basis and used to inform the planning process.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children settle swiftly into the world of school because of effective induction arrangements and strong links with the neighbouring pre-school class. As a result, children develop close, trusting relationships with the staff. They arrive happily with their parents and carers each morning and show great confidence in daily routines.

Staff planning is thorough and detailed. It ensures a good mix of adult-led and child-initiated activities. For instance, a story about pirates has grabbed the imagination of the children. As well as enjoying the fun of dressing up, they are making good gains in speaking and listening through role play or discussing how best to build a pirate boat. At the same time, an adult-led programme of work to develop children's knowledge of the sounds of letters is having a positive impact on children's early reading. Children select equipment and resources and use them thoughtfully when directing their own work in both indoor and outdoor environments. Adults are effectively deployed to target small groups and individuals to assess their learning. This works well, but the questioning skills of some adults is not always sharp enough to extend pupils' language.

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The data for last year's Reception children indicate that children made good progress from their starting points, which were much lower than those expected of four-year-olds, especially in personal, social and emotional development and speaking and listening. By the end of the year most were working securely at average standards across the areas of learning. The profile of the current cohort on entry was also below expectations. The latest set of assessments shows that children are making good progress and, with the exception of a few with significant special educational needs, most are on course to be working securely within the early learning goals by July.

The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led and the staff team work works well together, effectively modelling positive relationships. Close teamwork ensures assessment arrangements are thorough, but while day-to-day assessments provide a good record of what children are doing, opportunities to identify and record the next steps in learning are sometimes missed. Individual learning journals are building a compelling picture of children's achievements across the areas of learning. These are augmented by the home↔school learning books, many of which demonstrate the positive impact of the developing partnership between home and school.

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

At 34% the proportion of questionnaire returns was in line with the national average. The large majority of parents and carers who returned questionnaires and spoke to inspectors are pleased with their children's experience of school. A few expressed concerns about a number of aspects of the school's work, including behaviour, the leadership of the school and the extent to which it takes account of parental views. Inspectors agree with the views of the majority of parents. The school successfully includes a number of pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties and manages their behaviour well. The views of parents and carers are canvassed regularly by governors and considered when planning for school improvement. One or two parents and carers feel the school is unfair to treat the late arrival of pupils as 'unauthorised absence,' but this is correct practice and reflects the determination of senior leaders to encourage punctuality and regular attendance.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Meadows 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 49 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 143 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	23	47	21	43	3	6	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	24	49	21	43	2	4	1	2
My school informs me about my child's progress	16	33	29	59	2	4	2	4
My child is making enough progress at this school	13	27	30	61	5	10	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	13	27	33	67	2	4	1	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	17	35	23	47	4	8	2	4
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	14	29	32	65	1	2	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)	14	29	27	55	4	8	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	16	33	27	55	2	4	2	4
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	13	27	26	53	3	6	5	10
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	12	24	21	43	4	8	4	8
The school is led and managed effectively	11	22	28	57	4	8	3	6
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	17	35	24	49	4	8	2	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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	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.



20 January 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Meadows School, High Wycombe HP10 0HF

Thank you all for the help you gave to the inspectors when we visited your school. Your friendly welcome made us feel part of your community during our time with you and our conversations were extremely useful in finding out all about The Meadows. Overall we consider that the school provides you with a satisfactory education.

All the staff work very hard to make sure you are safe and well cared for. Several of you told us that behaviour is good and that any problems will be sorted out quickly. We agree. You were polite and courteous throughout the inspection. You have lots of opportunities to keep fit and stay healthy and it is good to see so many of you joining in these activities after school. Almost all of you say you enjoy school and we could see that in most lessons and in much of your work. However, there are one or two things we want to happen that will make your school even better.

For several years too many pupils leaving your school have not reached the levels they need to in English and mathematics if they are to succeed at secondary school. During the inspection we could see that things are improving. Your teachers are making learning fun and setting you a good level of challenge in your work. As a result you are all making good progress and we want you to keep this up so that by the time you are in Year 6 about 80% of you at least reach the levels expected for your age.

A few of you miss too much school. When this happens you get behind with your work and this makes it much harder for you to achieve the grades that you need to succeed in life. We want you to help your parents and carers by showing them how keen you are to get to school on time each day and do your best.

Yours sincerely

Hugh Protherough

Lead inspector

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