

The Meads Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109558
Local Authority	Luton
Inspection number	377942
Inspection dates	18–19 October 2011
Reporting inspector	Philip Mann HMI

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	436
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Cindy Williams
Headteacher	Richard Jenkins
Date of previous school inspection	10 December 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. They observed 18 teachers teaching 23 lessons. Several shorter observations of teaching and learning in Key Stages 1 and 2 were undertaken. Meetings were held with parents and carers, groups of pupils, governors, staff and the headteacher, deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at the school's documentation related to safeguarding, improvement plans, records of pupils' progress, the monitoring of teaching and pupils' work. Inspectors analysed 153 questionnaires from 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 effectively is the school raising standards in writing?
- Are teachers providing more able pupils with sufficient levels of challenge to ensure that they achieve well in lessons?
- How effectively are teachers using marking to inform pupils about what they need to do next to improve?
- How effective has school leadership been in addressing inconsistencies in teaching and learning across the school?
- How effectively are school leaders using self-evaluation and monitoring to eliminate gaps in achievement to improve outcomes further and especially that of girls?

Information about the school

The school is above average in size and serves the northern side of Luton and other areas of central Luton from which pupils travel to school by bus. It is rapidly growing as a result of a major building programme. Just over half the pupils are White British and almost half come from minority ethnic backgrounds. The number of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above average and increasing. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average. More pupils join or leave the school during the year than in most schools because of mobility in the local population. The school continues to hold Healthy Schools status.

A new headteacher is in post following a period of uncertainty regarding school leadership after the previous 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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school that has benefited from well-focused and determined leadership through a period of significant change. The headteacher has instilled a sense of purpose among the staff and teamwork is a strength. Together with the staff he has established a very positive climate for learning based on a well understood set of core values. These are shared very effectively during assemblies and through everything the school does. Combined with the excellent promotion of community cohesion, they provide solid foundations for pupils' achievement and ensure good value for money. Many parents and carers agree with the views of inspectors. Comments such as, 'The school has come on leaps and bounds in the last 18 months due to the new headteacher' reflect the views of many about the quality of school leadership following a period of uncertainty after the last inspection.

Pupils are keen to come to Meads Primary School and the vast majority of pupils demonstrate very positive attitudes towards learning. Many teachers work hard to make learning enjoyable and worthwhile and pupils respond well to this. Behaviour is good throughout the school. Relationships between pupils and adults and among pupils themselves are extremely positive. This is because core values such as tolerance, listening to the views of others and the celebration of diversity are covered comprehensively within the school's outstanding provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils appreciate the good levels of care, guidance and support provided for them. Those pupils who have difficulty in behaving well respond positively to carefully-targeted adult support.

Inspectors observed good or better teaching in over half of the lessons seen and characteristics of good provision were noted in several other visits into the classrooms. Good levels of consistency in planning, display and the establishment of a positive climate for learning exist in all the classrooms. These factors contribute effectively to positive learning experiences for pupils. However, in those lessons judged satisfactory, teachers place too much emphasis on talking at length to the pupils rather than using technology to engage the pupils more actively in their learning. This weaker teaching is being addressed effectively by the headteacher and senior leaders. The school has recognised that a more structured approach to the teaching of phonics is needed to facilitate better outcomes for pupils in literacy. Achievement in numeracy is good. The quality of marking is good and an improvement on the findings of the last inspection. Teachers' comments are detailed and used well to set further challenges for all pupils in their literacy and numeracy books before they go onto their next task. Pupils say that they find the teachers'

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comments very useful and many enter into little written conversations with their teacher about their work. This contributes effectively to the very positive climate for learning found around the school.

Governance is good. Governors are very supportive of the school and demonstrate a good understanding of its strengths and areas for development. Access to good data now provides them with good opportunities to monitor the school's performance and ask challenging questions of school leaders about possible areas for improvement. Safeguarding procedures are robust. Strong partnerships have been established with a number of other key partners and organisations to enhance the overall quality of provision and make effective use of limited resources. Self-evaluation is accurate because school leaders regularly monitor the quality of provision and use it to inform planning for school improvement. An improving trend in pupils' standards as a result of these actions is now clearly evident and shows capacity for sustained improvement is good. However, middle managers and those with subject responsibilities are yet to play a significant role in this drive for improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further raise standards in reading and writing by:
 - implementing an effective strategy for the teaching of phonics within the school
 - encouraging the pupils to write in a neat cursive style at the earliest opportunity.

- Ensure that all teaching is consistently good or better throughout the school by:
 - increasing the pace of learning in lessons
 - making sure that teachers use technology and resources effectively to support their teaching and engage pupils in the review of their learning.

- Enable middle managers to play a full part in school self-evaluation and improvement.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Achievement is good. From below average starting points in language and communication, pupils reach standards that are average and rising at the end of Key Stage 2 in English and mathematics. Levels of pupil mobility are high and a growing number of pupils who are at the early stages of speaking English are joining the school in all year groups. This makes it harder for the school to achieve higher standards by the end of Key Stage 2. However, closer inspection of accurate data related to the performance of the Year 6 pupils who started in Year 3 and took the 2011 national tests, confirms above average attainment in mathematics, where a quarter of pupils attained the higher Level 5. This pattern of improvement is reflected in the predicted outcomes for the current Year 6 pupils. However, standards in writing are not as high because of gaps in the pupils' knowledge of

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letter sounds and the application of this in their reading and spelling of unfamiliar words. Furthermore, the pupils’ writing and presentation in their books is untidy and many do not write in a consistent, cursive style. This limits the ability of older pupils to write quickly and at length.

Positive outcomes related to the quality of the pupils’ learning experiences are becoming increasingly more evident in lessons. For instance, in an outstanding science lesson in Year 4, pupils in pairs used a netbook computer with enthusiasm to research information about friction. This provided excellent opportunities for the development of their literacy and interpersonal skills while undertaking scientific enquiry. Such high quality learning is not evident in all lessons in other year groups. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language make good progress because of the teachers’ ability to match work to prior attainment. Good levels of challenge are provided for more able pupils in many lessons. Those from minority ethnic groups achieve well because overall provision meets their needs well and diversity is celebrated fully.

Pupils demonstrate a clear sense of enjoyment in being at school because their teachers plan many interesting things for them to do in lessons such as being a Roman soldier as part of a historical enactment in the playground. One pupil in Year 6 stated that, ‘I wake up and can’t wait to get into school and learn something new! This week we are learning how to paint in art.’ Girls respond well to teachers’ questions and their achievement is good. Behaviour is good in lessons, around the school and in the playground. Pupils say that when the few incidents of bullying do occur they are confident that they are dealt with by senior staff effectively. Pupils are very respectful of each other; they are polite and conduct themselves well. Pupils know how to keep themselves healthy and safe because these important topics are covered well. For instance, they demonstrate a very good understanding of issues related to road safety because of close links with the local community support officer and cycling safety courses. The school council provides good opportunities for the pupils to have a voice in the future development of the school.

These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes

Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attainment ¹	3
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

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

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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	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Teaching and learning are good. The vast majority of teachers make clear to pupils what they are going to learn next and what is expected of them at the end of the lesson. Teachers in the good or better lessons use digital visualisers, interactive whiteboards and questions well to review the progress of the pupils' learning during the lessons and facilitate good pace to their teaching. These strengths in teaching are not often evident in the lessons graded satisfactory. In these lessons, teachers talk too much and make very little use of technology to support teaching. Pupils' progress in these lessons is slower as a result. Procedures for the assessment of pupils' progress are good. Data are used effectively to identify gaps in achievement and ensure work is carefully matched to pupils' ability.

A vibrant and exciting curriculum supports the pupils' learning well. A good focus is placed on the teaching of literacy and numeracy. The range of pupils' writing experiences is good. This is an improvement on the findings of the previous inspection. However, there is no structured approach to the teaching of phonics across the school. This limits the rate at which pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and the growing number who speak English as an additional language, can achieve in literacy. The teaching of French and a wide range of extra-curricular activities outside lessons, however, provide good levels of enrichment.

The care, guidance and support for pupils are good. The benefits of good attendance are promoted well. Detailed policies and procedures are in place to ensure that pupils remain safe and protected at school and especially when using the internet for research in lessons. Effective marking provides pupils with good levels of guidance in their literacy and numeracy books. As a result, they can talk confidently about what they need to do next to improve. The most vulnerable pupils and those who are looked after are provided with sensitive and effective support to ensure that they achieve well.

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	2

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relevant, through partnerships	
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and senior leaders demonstrate the necessary drive and ambition to develop the school and raise standards further. The school expansion has been managed very well. A very positive climate for learning has been quickly established through the sharing of common values by pupils and staff alike. Teamwork is a strength and staff share a common purpose. The monitoring of teaching and learning is rigorous and systematic. Weaker teaching is tackled robustly by the headteacher and senior staff, and detailed support plans effectively facilitate improvement in teaching competencies. As a result, there are greater levels of consistency in teaching quality in both year groups and across the key stages. Parents, carers and pupils comment positively about these improvements.

Challenging targets are set, based on accurate self-evaluation, informed by regular and focused monitoring by the headteacher and governing body. The correct priorities for further development are highlighted within a comprehensive plan for school improvement. The involvement of subject leaders in this process is less well developed. The promotion of equality and diversity is good and data are used well to identify any gaps in achievement and tackle any discrimination. This is resulting in an improving trend in pupils’ outcomes overall but standards in writing still lag behind those in mathematics. The promotion of community cohesion is excellent. The school has established strong links with other local schools, representatives from different faith groups and the local community. Links are being established with schools in Bangladesh and Nepal. Older pupils will be visiting France with another Luton school this year.

Safeguarding procedures are applied effectively to ensure that all staff and volunteers working with the pupils are properly vetted. Governors take seriously their responsibilities for the oversight of risk assessment and health and safety.

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	2

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tackles discrimination	
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make good progress in their learning from their starting points. They settle in well to school routines because of well organised induction arrangements and good adult care and support. As a result, children feel safe and enjoy their learning. The staff provide an exciting range of activities inside and out. Activities outside mirror those planned for indoors and children demonstrate enjoyment in their learning and play. This is an improvement on the previous inspection. Behaviour is good. The children co-operate well with each other in sharing toys on the carpet or books in the reading areas. Detailed safeguarding policies and procedures ensure that children are protected and well supported. There are effective partnerships with parents, carers, other agencies and providers of childcare. Leadership and management are good and clearly focused on driving forward improvements in provision to raise the achievement of the children. Self-evaluation is effective at identifying strengths and areas for further development. Resources are generally well deployed to improve outcomes for all children.

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

Many parents and carers feel that the school is being led and managed well and inspection evidence corroborates this. Some parents and carers expressed concern about the quality of communication between school and home. Inspectors looked at this closely and found that the school is making every effort to include parents and carers in their children’s learning and in what is going on at school. Many parents and carers felt that the school is a harmonious community where their children want to be. Inspectors found strong evidence to support this view.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Meads 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 153 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 436 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	84	55	64	42	2	1	2	1
The school keeps my child safe	76	50	72	47	2	1	1	1
The school informs me about my child’s progress	44	29	93	61	11	7	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	44	29	93	61	10	7	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	52	34	96	63	2	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	50	33	89	58	10	7	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	51	33	94	61	3	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)	53	35	86	56	7	5	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	52	34	87	57	6	4	2	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	43	28	92	60	8	5	2	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	39	25	88	58	16	10	3	2
The school is led and managed effectively	51	33	92	60	3	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	68	44	80	52	3	2	0	0

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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 2010 to 08 April 2011 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 2010/11 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 October 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Meads Primary School, Luton, LU3 2UE

I would like to thank you all on behalf of the inspection team for making us all feel so welcome. We really enjoyed visiting your school and were very impressed with your attitudes towards learning, good behaviour and how much you enjoy being at school. Your school has improved in many ways since it was last inspected. It is now a good school with some things that make it stand out above others. In particular, we were very impressed in the way your headteacher has led the school through a period of change to ensure it becomes one happy community where the views and backgrounds of everyone are respected and valued.

The teachers are working hard to make sure that lessons are interesting for you and learning is fun. In many lessons this is the case. In some classes, the lessons are not as good as the best in the school. This is because sometimes these lessons are too slow and the teachers are not using technology and computers enough to help you in your learning. This is something that I have asked them to work at for the future. Many of you are doing well in your numeracy lessons but not as well in literacy. This is because some of you are not sure how to use the sounds of letters to read words that are unfamiliar to you. In future, the staff are going to work together to make sure that all of you know these important sounds to improve your spelling, reading and handwriting. The staff provide good levels of help and support. Many of you told us how much help you get from the teachers' careful marking. The support staff work alongside many of you in lessons or outside the classrooms to provide you with the help that you need to succeed.

All of the staff and governors are keen to improve the school further. Much has been achieved but teachers with special responsibilities are going to play an even bigger part in further improving the work of the school. You can all play your part by always behaving well, working as hard as you can and trying to write as neatly as possible.

I wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Philip Mann
Her Majesty's Inspector

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