

Meridian Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110626
Local Authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	378133
Inspection dates	7–8 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Peter Thompson

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	217
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Christine Westgarth
Headteacher	Glennis Virgo
Date of previous school inspection	10 March 2009
School address	Harbour Avenue Comberton Cambridge CB23 7DD
Telephone number	01223 262423
Fax number	01223 263055
Email address	office@meridian.cambs.sch.uk

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The team observed 14 lessons taught by seven teachers. Meetings were held with a group of pupils, two parents, staff and the Chair of the Governing Body. The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a representative sample of pupils' work, policy documents and school reports. They scrutinised responses to questionnaires returned from 78 parents and carers, 20 staff and 47 pupils.

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

- What does the school's tracking information show about the progress and achievement of pupils?
- To what extent is there a shared vision and embedded ambition among the staff?
- What are the barriers to learning that prevent pupils making better progress?
- Are talented children and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities sufficiently supported and challenged?
- What opportunities do middle leaders have to monitor lessons and spread good teaching practice?

Information about the school

The school is a smaller-than-average primary school serving the areas of Comberton, Toft and Eversden. Most children attend the Comberton playgroup before entering the school and move to Comberton Village College at the age of 11 years. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. The percentages of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language are also well below average. The proportions of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those with a statement of special educational needs, are well below average. The school has achieved national Healthy Schools status, received the Activemark and Eco-School awards and is part of the local Network 11 partnership.

The school makes provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage in a Reception class, known in the school as the Foundation Year.

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

Meridian Primary School provides a good education. Senior leaders are motivated to seek further improvements and are well focused on improving areas of weakness. They have an ambitious vision for the future and high expectations. Planning is good and based on accurate self-evaluation and the effective use of high-quality data. As a result, standards are now above average, and the quality of teaching and the curriculum have improved since the last inspection and are now good. The curriculum is broad, creative and provides good opportunities for all pupils to learn. Considerable emphasis is given to reading, writing and numeracy throughout the school. Teachers are being encouraged to introduce topics based on a number of subjects to further motivate pupils to learn and improve standards.

Attendance is high and pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. Gifted and talented pupils are identified and given extension work. Pupils feel safe in the school, a view which is endorsed by parents and carers. Pupils understand what is required to lead safe and healthy lives and they contribute to their school and local community well. As a result, outcomes for individual and groups of pupils have improved and are now good.

The effectiveness of the governing body is good. Governors help to shape the direction of the school and the governing body provides robust challenge and support. The improvements brought about by the effective and successful senior leadership team and governing body mean the school has good capacity to sustain further improvement.

Despite this good picture the school has correctly identified that the achievement of pupils could be higher. Senior leaders recognise that the proportion of good and outstanding lessons and the challenge to pupils in some lessons need to improve if the school is to make further progress. They also recognise that while the oversight, tracking and intervention for the small number of pupils with special educational needs and/disabilities is improving rapidly there is some way to go before the school's procedures are fully effective. The themes in the curriculum are not coordinated well enough to ensure they harmonise well with the rest of the curriculum. While parents and carers play an appropriate part in the life of the school and are well informed about day-to-day and routine matters, senior leaders do not inform them sufficiently about major curriculum developments that affect the way their children learn and the activities they undertake. This lack of information does not adequately prepare parents and carers to help their children to learn and gives

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them the impression the school is not managed well. One parent expressed this well in response to the questionnaire, 'I think communication could be improved. Letters each term outlining what is being studied that term and what parents can do to support learning would be very helpful.'

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the achievement of pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 still further by:
 - increasing the proportion of good and outstanding lessons
 - ensuring that all pupils are appropriately challenged in lessons
 - improving the oversight, tracking and interventions for the small number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities
 - ensuring that as themes are introduced in the curriculum they are well coordinated and harmonised with the rest of the curriculum.

- Ensure that parent and carers are fully informed about major developments that affect the way children learn and the activities children undertake in order to adequately prepare them to help their children.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

On entry to Year 1 pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is broadly average. As pupils move through the school, most acquire knowledge, develop understanding and practise skills well. This is confirmed by both lesson observations and school data. By the end of Year 2 many pupils have above average skills, particularly in writing. Pupils enjoy learning and are keen to do their best work. For example, in a good English lesson, pupils in Year 2 were seen enjoying using the sounds that letters make to improve their reading. They were grouped according to ability in the lesson and helped to make good progress by the teacher and two assistants who used their understanding to inspire the children. In an outstanding mathematics lesson, pupils in Year 5 were seen working in ability groups using dominos in a game to learn what is meant by 'conjecture'. Pupils very much enjoyed this lesson and made outstanding progress. As a result of their good overall progress, pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6 is above average, especially in English. The overall achievement of most pupils is good.

The small number pupils who speak English as an additional language make good and often very good progress. The progress made by the few pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those whose circumstances may make them vulnerable is satisfactory and improving rapidly with the support of one-to-one tuition and teaching assistants working with small groups in lessons. The very small minority of pupils that enter the school after the beginning of Year 1 make the same good progress as other pupils.

Pupils make good progress in developing their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. They reflect well on their experiences and success in a range of school

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activities and are sympathetic to the feelings, values and beliefs of others. For their ages, pupils are appropriately aware of the history and culture of the society in which they live and of those of other communities further afield. They play an active part in the school council, raise funds for charities and sing in a choir to provide entertainment outside the school. They are eager to work together and with the adults in the school. This and pupils’ good and improving key skills prepare them well for their future.

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

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching varies from satisfactory to outstanding and is good overall. In the large majority of lessons, pace and expectations are high and teachers use their knowledge to inspire pupils to learn. Effective questioning is used to gauge pupils’ understanding and to reinforce explanations when necessary. The best lessons feature a good range of teaching styles and activities. For example, in lessons on the theme 'Can you dig it' pupils in Year 3 were seen working in groups to find words that describe ammonites and write poems about them. The teacher introduced the topic well to the whole group, illustrating her lesson with an interactive whiteboard. She used questions effectively to engage pupils and estimate their progress. Earlier, pupils had been digging in the sandpit to unearth wooden models of the skeletons of dinosaurs, cleaning them and putting them together. Pupils were excited and fully involved in these lessons. Assessment to support learning is good and effective use is made of peer assessment and self-assessment. The quality of marking and use of oral questioning have improved and most pupils know their targets and what they

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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need to do to improve their work.

All national curriculum requirements are met. Early evidence shows that the actions taken to introduce a more skill-orientated curriculum based on topics are helping to improve pupils’ motivation and learning. Phonics, the sounds that letters make, are taught effectively in Years 1 and 2. Pupils learn a wide range of subjects and in Years 3 to 6 the curriculum is enriched by the inclusion of Spanish. Visits are undertaken to places of interest and the school invites visiting speakers. A good range of clubs are provided and well attended during the lunch break.

Pastoral care and support are good. The acting special educational needs coordinator has recently introduced good procedures to support the small number of pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The staff have established effective links with pupils’ families and outside agencies. For example, the school supported a pupil well who arrived with a history of disruptive and violent behaviour. As a result of the school's work with his parents and local agencies, the pupil has now settled down in the school and manages his own behaviour effectively. The oversight, tracking and interventions for those who need support to learn are now well managed. Parents and carers of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well informed, advised and guided. All staff work effectively to help promote the emotional and social well-being of pupils and have a clear understanding of their needs. As a result, pupils develop good self-esteem and say they feel well supported at school. There are good transitional arrangements with the Comberton playgroup and Comberton Village College.

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?

All staff play their part in providing a positive and rewarding learning experience for all pupils. The school's high expectations are made clear to them and there is a shared vision for moving forward. All staff are involved in self-evaluation. The school uses realistic and challenging targets. Target-setting is based on accurate assessment and there are plenty of good data available in the school to support planning. Middle leaders, with clear guidance from the headteacher and deputy headteacher, monitor teaching well and play a leading role in the school's drive to improve teaching and learning. The senior staff receive good professional support from the schools in the Network 11 group, including joint training days.

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All safeguarding regulations and duties are met and arrangements and policies for safeguarding are considered and approved by the governing body. Policies and procedures for safeguarding are in line with government recommendations. Rigorous checks are carried out on all newly-appointed staff and central records are kept. The school has clear policies for health and safety, which are reviewed regularly and implemented effectively. Safety checks are carried out and any recommendations made acted upon. Staff have been appropriately trained in child protection and regular risk assessments are undertaken. However, occasionally there are some minor instances when staff do not always follow the procedures approved by the governing body. The school engages well with outside agencies to support the safety and well-being of pupils and staff.

The governing body holds senior leaders to account for tackling weaknesses. It routinely evaluates the work of the school through its committees. All governors visit the school on a regular basis and understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school well. Governors place great emphasis on treating every pupil equally and as an individual with potential to succeed.

The school has undertaken a clear analysis of the local socio-economic, ethnic and religious needs of the local community. It promotes community cohesion well. Pupils work in harmony in the school and are tolerant of each other. The school effectively engages with a range of outside community groups. Pupils take part in musical performances and drama events outside the school. They learn about other cultures through the school's links with primary schools in The Gambia and London, and through their efforts to collect gift-aid goods for children in other countries.

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	3
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	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

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Early Years Foundation Stage

The overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Children enter the school with skills that are broadly in line with those expected for their age. Staff use their good understanding of how young children learn to inspire and help them to make good progress in several areas of learning, particularly in their personal, social and emotional development. Overall children make average progress in problem solving, reasoning and numeracy, and in some aspects of their early literacy skills. By the time children reach the end of the Reception Year, their overall development is good across the full range of assessments. Good use is made of the indoor and outdoor areas. Activities are well planned and there is a good balance between activities chosen by children and those led by the teacher. Teaching assistants make good contributions to children’s learning and enjoyment. The well-developed system for tracking children’s progress in the Reception Year provides good information about their learning and where it might be improved. Good leadership ensures that children’s welfare needs are well met. Staff are skilled at promoting positive attitudes and ensuring that all children are engaged and included. The effective links with parents and carers, and outside agencies, make a good contribution to children's learning and progress.

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

The parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire were generally positive and supportive. A very large majority said that their children enjoy school and that the school keeps their children safe. One parent said, 'We have recently moved to the area and our daughter has only been at Meridian since September. My daughter has gained confidence and we have seen a massive improvement in her maths already as she says, "The teacher makes learning fun." We have had nothing but good and positive experiences so far.'

A minority of parents and carers raised some concerns about the leadership and management of the school and that their suggestions and concerns are not taken into account. Inspection evidence indicates that the leadership and management of the school to be good overall and that the governing body regularly samples the views of parents and carers and takes them into account. Inspectors found that parents and carers are not well enough informed about major curriculum developments in a way that helps them to support their children’s learning, and this

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aspect of leadership and management is covered fully in the inspection report.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Meridian 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 78 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 217 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	30	38	40	51	5	6	2	3
The school keeps my child safe	37	47	35	45	4	5	1	1
The school informs me about my child’s progress	18	23	43	55	15	19	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	12	15	45	58	13	17	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	22	28	40	51	8	10	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	15	19	40	51	20	26	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	15	19	49	63	6	8	1	1
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)	28	36	26	33	12	15	4	5
The school meets my child’s particular needs	13	17	40	51	10	13	4	5
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	19	24	42	54	8	10	3	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	13	17	32	41	14	18	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	18	23	28	36	24	31	3	4
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	19	24	32	41	15	19	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	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.



9 November 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Meridian Primary School, Cambridge, CB23 7DD

My colleagues and I enjoyed our visit to your school and we thank you for your welcome and the opportunity to see you at work in your lessons. We judged your school to be good, that means that it has got many things right and provides you with a good education. Your attainment is above average and the progress you make in lessons is good, an improvement since the last inspection.

We found your attendance is high and behaviour in lessons and around the school good. You are so lucky to have such a good school and I know from what you and your parents and carers have told us that you enjoy school. You clearly like the lunchtime and outside school activities very much.

Your headteacher and the other adults in the school continue to make changes to improve your education further. However, we know that your parents and carers would like to know more about what is being done so that they can help you more to learn. We have also asked the headteacher, governors and your class teachers to find ways to help you reach higher standards by:

- increasing the number of outstanding and good lessons
- ensuring you are always challenged in lessons and your learning is well coordinated to ensure you learn all the basic skills
- improving the way those of you that have special needs are looked after and your learning tracked.

You can help them by always doing your best work.

Yours sincerely

Peter Thompson
Lead Inspector

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