

Meridian Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114475
Local Authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	378863
Inspection dates	14–15 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Lynda Welham

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	372
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Toby Lindsay
Headteacher	Claire Westcott
Date of previous school inspection	14 January 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They visited an assembly and 21 lessons, observing 17 members of staff. Inspectors also held meetings with staff, pupils and members of the governing body. They spoke to parents and carers. Inspectors looked at pupils' work, the analysis of the tracking of pupils' progress, attendance records, school policies and procedures, school leaders' monitoring records and school development plans. They also analysed 66 responses to the questionnaire distributed to parents and carers and other responses from staff and pupils.

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

- The current quality of provision and its impact on raising achievement and progress.
- The school's capacity to improve given recent changes in leadership and high levels of staff turnover.
- The evidence for improving outcomes in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Information about the school

Meridian Community Primary School is larger than the average-sized primary school. The school is organised into two parallel classes per year group. The school serves the local area and nearly all pupils are from White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average, including those with a statement of special educational needs. Their range of difficulties mainly relate to specific learning difficulties, speech, language and communication difficulties, and behavioural and emotional problems. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is in line with that found nationally. The school has Healthy School status, the Artsmark award and the silver Activemark award.

The headteacher and deputy headteacher were recently appointed. Leadership roles have been reorganised within the school and there has been a 50% turnover of staff in the past academic year. The governing body has recently been reorganised and a new Chair has been appointed.

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

Meridian is a satisfactory and improving school. Following a rigorous review of the school's strengths and weaknesses by the new headteacher, areas for improvement were accurately identified as a matter of urgency. Particularly good support from the deputy headteacher and the governing body has allowed the school to move forward at a fast pace. New systems, structures and support programmes are already securing improvements in teaching, learning and progress, and the curriculum. Not all improvements have had time to have a full impact on pupil outcomes, and leadership and management are satisfactory. Self-evaluation is accurate and has been shared with staff and the governing body so all have a realistic understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. Considerable improvements to provision and the leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage have been achieved since the last inspection. These improvements and the strong commitment of staff to build on current achievements and drive improvement provide a satisfactory capacity for future improvement. The governing body supports the headteacher well in determining the school's strategic direction and is becoming increasingly involved in monitoring and evaluating the impact of school development planning.

A strength of the school is its pastoral care, especially for those pupils whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable. A strong ethos of care and consideration for others leads to pupils' satisfactory spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and good behaviour. Pupils are kept safe and feel safe. They contribute well to their school community, for example, through the work of the school council in improving playtime facilities. The school's satisfactory curriculum is enriched by trips and by well-attended extra-curricular activities that contribute well to pupils' personal development. The school knows that curriculum planning needs further refinement following a change from mixed-year groups to single-year groups to ensure an appropriate progression of skills. They recognise that information and communication technology (ICT) is underdeveloped in the school. Teachers mark books thoroughly, and there is some evidence that pupils are increasingly being involved in self-evaluation, but not enough information is provided to pupils to enable them to know precisely the steps to take to improve their work.

The overwhelming majority of parents and carers appreciate the work of the school. One wrote, 'I feel very honoured that my child attends this school and the staff have given my child wonderful emotional support.'

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Progress is good through the Early Years Foundation Stage. Throughout the rest of the school, pupils make satisfactory progress so that attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 is broadly average. Although standards dipped in 2010, the current Year 6 pupils are well on track to meet challenging targets in 2012. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Relationships between pupils and teachers are good, and pupils behave well in class and are keen to learn. In every class, pupils are encouraged to explore and share ideas with each other through the use of 'talk partners'. Additional adults support pupils' learning well. The school is aware that at times teachers talk for too long at the beginning of lessons so that pupils have too little time to engage in independent learning activities. Although pupils' progress is tracked, at times assessment information is not used well enough to ensure that activities match the needs of all pupils, especially the more-able.

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.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure assessment information is used to plan lessons so that work meets the needs of all pupils, especially the more-able.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that pupils make consistent progress by:
 - giving pupils clear advice on the next steps to take to improve their work
 - providing sufficient opportunities for pupils to engage in independent learning.
- Refine curriculum planning so that there is a clear progression of skills, including in ICT, as pupils move through the school.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Pupils' attainment on entry to the Reception classes is generally below or well below the levels typically expected of this age group, particularly in speaking and listening skills. Children receive a good start to their education, settle in quickly and happily engage in the many exciting learning opportunities afforded them. They make satisfactory progress overall, and good progress in speaking and listening, and communication, language and literacy. At the end of Key Stage 1, attainment in reading, writing and mathematics has improved steadily in four of the last five years. Inspection evidence shows that the large majority of Year 2 pupils have made satisfactory progress. By the end of Key Stage 2, attainment is broadly average, which represents satisfactory progress. The progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those from minority ethnic groups is also satisfactory, in line with that of all other groups of pupils.

Pupils develop good communication skills and are extremely articulate and polite

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

when speaking to an adult and to each other. In lessons, pupils respond eagerly to tasks based on first-hand experience, such as videoing one another reading with good expression in Year 6 and writing about their experiences in Year 2 when they dressed as book characters. Overall, however, there is too little challenge for more-able pupils and too few activities where pupils can be actively involved.

Pupils’ awareness of the importance of physical activity and a healthy diet are good. This is reflected in the school achieving Healthy School status. Pupils feel safe at school; they are keen to help one another and take pride in contributing to their school community through fundraising events and membership of the school council. Pupils were involved in choosing whole-school values to focus on for the year, such as kindness and respect, which contributes to the thoughtful, kind behaviour that pupils display. The school recognises that pupils have limited opportunities to engage with a range of groups not represented in their immediate community and have plans to establish links with a primary school in a different location. The school’s strenuous efforts to improve attendance have been successful in reducing the levels of absence and especially of persistent absentees. Pupils’ average level of attendance and satisfactory basic skills prepare them satisfactorily for their future lives.

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	3
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	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	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	3
The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching varies from satisfactory to good throughout the school. Teaching and learning are good in the Early Years Foundation Stage where teachers respond to children’s interests by providing a wide range of exciting and well-focused

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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learning opportunities. In Key Stages 1 and 2, recent improvements in tracking pupils’ progress has led to teachers beginning to use assessment information to target work more appropriately for pupils, but this is inconsistent and explains why more-able pupils are not always challenged to achieve as well as they should. In lower Key Stage 1, activities are not always challenging enough so that pupils are sometimes not fully engaged in purposeful learning. Explanations at the beginning of some lessons are too long and insufficient time is available for pupils to complete tasks independently. Work is marked regularly and, although teachers’ comments praise good work, guidance about the next steps pupils might take to improve is inconsistent. Pupils are encouraged to self-assess, using a ‘traffic-light’ system, but for the older ones this is not sufficiently rigorous and does not relate precisely enough to success criteria established at the beginning of the lesson.

The curriculum is satisfactory, with a strong emphasis on literacy and numeracy. There are some good cross-curricular links, such as when Year 5 pupils were drawing images in response to an evocative text, and through design and technology links with history when Year 6 pupils made excellent models of Anderson shelters. Pupils used ICT effectively to research work about Victorians but generally ICT is underdeveloped in the school. A reasonable range of clubs, trips and other activities enhance the personal development of pupils for which the school has rightly gained a number of national awards.

Staff are vigilant and respond quickly to all aspects of care and guidance, working collaboratively with families when required. Good pastoral support is provided for pupils through partnerships with outside agencies such as the Speech and Language Support service, behaviour and health care services. One parent/carer commented, ‘My child only started in September and doesn’t like going anywhere without me, but the move was smooth and my child has settled in really well. I feel really well informed, my child is learning lots and his teacher is fantastic.’

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	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The new headteacher and leadership team, with support from the local authority, have quickly developed an accurate understanding of the school’s performance and what needs to be improved. Improvement planning is robust, with appropriate timescales and rigorous accountability procedures to bring about improvement. Systems to accurately track pupils’ progress have been established. Precise feedback

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from lesson observations has helped teachers to improve their teaching and the proportion of lessons graded as good has improved as a result. There is greater equality of opportunity for pupils as extensive withdrawal from lessons has been replaced with a more inclusive practice of pupils remaining in class alongside their peers, supported by intervention strategies. Targets for pupils at the end of Year 6 have been revised to reflect greater challenge. Staff have a renewed sense of purpose, accountability and a common drive to raise standards and achievement. The impact of these initiatives has not yet had time to show significant improvement in outcomes, but early indications of impact are encouraging, such as clearer learning objectives and more systematic planning to cater for the needs of all pupils.

The supportive governing body is benefiting from training in holding the school to account for outcomes for pupils, and has a clear strategic overview of the school’s strengths and areas for development. The governing body works closely with the senior leaders to ensure that safeguarding and child protection procedures are robust.

The school is a very cohesive community. Links have been established with the local secondary school and a partner primary school, particularly in mathematics and sporting activities. Recent links have been established with a school in France. The new leadership team is working hard to engage with all parents and carers, for example by holding coffee mornings and afternoon sessions to explain proposed changes and the school’s improvement planning. Parent and carer volunteers help in school and on trips. Parents and carers are kept informed of their child’s progress at regular parents’ evenings and through curriculum information evenings, such as a reading workshop organised by the Early Years Foundation Stage team.

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

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Early Years Foundation Stage

The good progress children make in relation to their starting points is particularly noticeable in personal development and communication, literacy and language. Teaching is good and children’s interests are taken into account in curriculum planning, for example when a child’s interest in trains was being expanded to building a ‘train’ from crates outside, making and issuing tickets, deciding on roles for the journey. There was excellent input from the adult working with the group to extend vocabulary and imagination. The teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) is given high priority and children showed their good phonic knowledge by making plausible attempts at writing lists for things to take on a journey into space. Children were keen to tell inspectors why they were making pictures using scissors to cut out images. A child said, ‘We have got our Henri Matisse hats on.’

Parents and carers are kept informed as to what children will be learning that day through a class noticeboard. Learning Journey books to share children’s progress with parents and carers are well annotated with photographs and pieces of work. Children cheerfully take responsibility for clearing up between activities, sustain activities for concentrated periods of time, and work and play collaboratively.

There are effective arrangements in place to ensure the safety and health of children. Staff ensure that all activities are risk assessed, and good health and well-being are encouraged through purposeful play, healthy snacks and teaching about the importance of personal hygiene. The recently appointed early years leader has made a good start in ensuring more accurate moderation of children’s levels of 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 proportion of questionnaires returned was below average. Almost all parents and carers were happy with their child’s experience of the school. All felt that the school kept their children safe. Inspection evidence supports these views. A very small minority of parents and carers felt that the school did not deal well with pupils’ unacceptable behaviour. Inspectors found behaviour at the school to be good. A few parents and carers felt that the new headteacher does not listen to their suggestions or criticisms. There was also a very small minority who were critical of the way the school is led and managed, and who felt the pace of change was too great.

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Inspectors found leadership and management of the school to be satisfactory. These concerns, and all other comments, were shared and discussed with the headteacher and members of the governing body.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Meridian Community 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 67 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 372 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	39	59	26	39	2	0		0
The school keeps my child safe	42	64	24	36	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	24	36	34	52	8	12	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	27	41	31	47	5	8	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	22	33	40	61	2	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	25	38	34	52	7	11	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	25	38	40	61	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)	27	41	30	45	3	5	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	26	39	36	55	4	6	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	21	32	31	47	11	17	0	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	15	23	34	52	9	14	3	5
The school is led and managed effectively	18	27	33	50	5	8	3	11
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	31	47	33	50	2	3	7	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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 31 December 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 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.



16 November 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Meridian Community Primary School, Peacehaven BN10 8BZ

I am writing to thank you for your help when we inspected your school and to let you know what we found out. Yours is a satisfactory school where the teaching is sound. We enjoyed our time spent in your lessons and talking to some of you. We also looked at the work of the school and talked to the staff and members of the governing body. We were interested in what your parents and carers think of your school, and we particularly enjoyed listening to what you had to say and reading your questionnaire returns.

Here are some good and other important things about your school.

- Reception children get off to a good start in their education.
- You reach standards that are broadly average.
- You told us how much you enjoyed school and all that it offers.
- Your attitudes to learning are good and most of you behave really well.
- We were impressed by how well you get on with each other.
- You told us how to lead safe, healthy lives.
- Your headteacher, together with the staff and all the adults in your school, are working hard to make it even better.

Here are things that we have asked your headteacher and teachers to do:

- make sure that they use the information they gather about your progress so that they can help you in the next step of your learning
- make sure that the work you do is at the right level for each of you, especially for those of you who find learning easy
- make sure lessons are even more interesting and include more ICT.

With best wishes

Yours sincerely

Lynda Welham
Lead Inspector

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