

Meryfield Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117184
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	379370
Inspection dates	28–29 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Anna Coyle

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	355
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Cooper
Headteacher	Rosemarie Alexander
Date of previous school inspection	20 May 2009
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 22 lessons and observed 13 teachers. They also held meetings with the headteacher, senior leadership team, subject leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body, the local authority's improvement partner and groups of pupils, parents and carers. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documents including minutes from the governing body's meetings, information about the curriculum, assessment and tracking data, the school development plan, senior leaders monitoring reports of the quality of teaching and learning, pupils' books and children's learning journals. The inspection questionnaires were analysed, including 77 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.

- Does teaching promote consistent progress in writing at Key Stage 1 and in mathematics at Key Stage 2, especially for the more-able pupils?
- Are lessons planned effectively to make sure that work is appropriately differentiated for all groups of pupils?
- How effective is the senior leadership of the school, and of English and mathematics?

Information about the school

This very large primary school is situated within a residential area. The majority of pupils are White British but there is also a high proportion from minority ethnic heritages. A large proportion speak English as an additional language: there are 38 languages spoken at the school of which, apart from English, Polish, Rumanian and Turkish are the most prevalent. The school has a high number of pupils who join or leave other than at the usual times during the school year. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is also above the national average and a few of these pupils have statements of special educational needs. After a period of stability over the last four years, there has been a significant turnover of staff recently including some staff absences due to ill health. The school is a growing community which is increasing its numbers on roll.

The school has a pre-nursery class, a nursery and a breakfast club which are all run by the governing body and were part of this inspection. It also has a privately-managed after-school club and provides a variety of family learning opportunities through Hertfordshire Family Learning Partnership Services (HAFLS). In addition, the school hosts a variety of parenting courses for the wider community in conjunction with the local children's centre. It is also used after school and at weekends by a range of community groups, including a supplementary school to raise the achievement of black minority ethnic pupils, and 'Noah's Ark' which is a play scheme for children with disabilities.

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

Meryfield Primary School provides a good education for its pupils. It values all pupils equally and successfully celebrates families' wide diversity of minority ethnic backgrounds. The school is highly inclusive and its care, guidance and support of pupils are good. There are effective links with parents and carers, which benefit pupils' learning. Parent and carer comments confirm this and one said, 'Meryfield is such a happy place. There is a real sense of family in the school. The teachers and support staff care about each of my children as individuals.'

Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They benefit from plenty of indoor and outdoor activities and good teaching that helps them to make good progress. The school's strong focus on basic literacy and numeracy skills means that all groups of pupils make good progress, including the many who learn to speak English as an additional language. As a result, achievement is good. There has been an upward trend in the test results over the last three years at both key stages and pupils' attainment is now broadly average by Year 6 in English and mathematics. However, writing at Key Stage 1 and mathematics at Key Stage 2 are still comparatively weaker areas in which relatively few more-able pupils attain the higher levels. The inspection evidence shows that pupils' spelling and the presentation of their work are inconsistent across the school, and pupils do not always use and apply their mathematical skills effectively. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, and the school functions as a harmonious environment in which all pupils are tolerant of each other's cultural backgrounds. Behaviour is good and pupils make good contributions to the school and the local community. Attendance is broadly average and is rising steadily due to the school's good efforts to reduce persistent absences.

Teaching is good overall and staff work together well to help pupils make consistent progress. The school effectively supports pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are vulnerable due to their circumstances, and helps them make good progress, particularly through the good use of reading programmes. However, teachers' planning does not always match work to pupils' abilities to provide enough challenge for the more able. This slows learning in a few lessons even though this group maintain broadly good progress overall. Pupils have clear targets to help them learn and teachers' marking usually identifies the next steps pupils are to take to improve their work, although there are a few inconsistencies in some classes. The school's good curriculum is enhanced by a wide range of after-school clubs and staff promote good community cohesion, but there

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are limited cross-curricular links between subjects and very few links with international communities to enrich pupils' learning.

Leadership, management and governance are good. The headteacher and deputy headteacher are dedicated to the school and provide a sense of ambition and drive for the staff. Self-evaluation is accurate. The senior leadership team functions effectively and the leadership of English and that of mathematics are good, although some other leaders are new to their roles and have not yet fully developed their responsibilities. The Chair of the Governing Body is a regular visitor to the school and ensures that the governors provide good support and challenge to leaders. The school's good leadership, rising standards and effective governance show that the school has good capacity to sustain improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in writing at Key Stage 1 and in mathematics at Key Stage 2 so that a larger proportion of pupils reach the higher levels at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 by:
 - improving pupils' spelling and presentation skills
 - helping pupils to use and apply their mathematical skills more effectively across a range of investigations.
- Improve teaching by:
 - making sure that the planning of all lessons includes sufficiently challenging work for the more able
 - ensuring that teachers' marking consistently identifies what pupils need to do next to improve their work.
- Extend the curriculum by:
 - creating more cross-curricular links between subjects
 - developing creative aspects of learning to include more links with international communities.
- Strengthen the roles of the new leaders by:
 - making sure that they have sufficient opportunities to develop their leadership skills and helping them to keep a close check on the attainment and progress of all groups of pupils.

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

From low starting points, pupils develop their basic skills well and attainment is rising steadily, although outcomes are affected by the by high numbers of pupils who join or leave the school at different times of the school year. In addition, a very high number of pupils are new to the English language. Nevertheless, pupils are integrated well and settle quickly so that they make good progress overall and

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achieve well. For example, in a Year 2 lesson on story writing, pupils listened well and used exciting vocabulary to convey ideas about the story of ‘The Emperor’s New Clothes’. Pupils with special educational needs and disabilities are integrated well to help them make good progress. For instance, they achieve well in reading sessions when they receive individualised support from staff. Pupils in Years 2 and 6 are currently working at levels that are broadly similar to those expected for their age in English and mathematics. For example, pupils in Year 6 enjoyed finding out about the properties of three-dimensional shapes and responded well to the teacher’s instructions to find the odd one out and the difference between shapes. However, pupils do not always use and apply their mathematical skills effectively; for example, in solving real-life problems or analysing data from investigations. In addition, there are often spelling mistakes in pupils’ books, and the work in English and mathematics books is sometimes untidy or not clearly laid out.

Pupils enjoy learning and concentrate well during lessons. They have a good understanding of right and wrong and are very tolerant of each other’s beliefs and cultures. They behave well and feel safe, with a good understanding of healthy lifestyles. Parents and carers feel that their children are doing well, ‘My children absolutely love this school. They are making such fantastic progress...they often come home telling me about the wonderful fun and exciting lessons they have had.’ Most pupils attend regularly and enjoy contributing to the school and local community through the school council and by raising funds for charities.

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
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

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How effective is the provision?

Experienced teachers and teaching assistants work well together and have high expectations of the pupils, which promote good learning. A significant number of teachers who are new to the school and to the profession are being supported well by their mentors to help them settle in. Relationships are generally positive and supportive, and teachers have sound subject knowledge. Staff provide good help to individuals with special educational needs and/or disabilities so that they learn well in small groups or in one-to-one sessions. Most staff use data effectively to ensure that pupils have challenging targets, but teachers' planning does not always provide enough extension activities to challenge the more able. Marking makes effective use of praise and most teachers provide useful comments to help pupils improve their work, although this inconsistent across classes and subjects. The school provides a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum for its pupils. Pupils have plenty of opportunities to develop their independence. Breakfast club and the good range of after-school clubs are well attended.

The care, guidance and support of pupils are good. Staff provide plenty of support and they share information well to make sure that pupils benefit from sensitive nurturing, especially those who are vulnerable because of their circumstances. The school helps many pupils from minority ethnic heritages who have little or no knowledge of English on entry by providing bilingual support for them. The school avidly promotes good attendance and is beginning to see the benefit of its hard work as attendance figures are rising steadily. It has good arrangements to help pupils transfer to other schools, whether they leave at the end of Year 6 or at other times in the academic year. One parent commented: 'The staff's commitment in ensuring good transition between year groups has enabled my children to settle very quickly at the beginning of each academic year. I feel that, with the incredible support shown by all the staff, my children will be able to reach their full potential.'

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?

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and deputy headteacher work together closely and have managed the recent staffing changes and absences

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due to ill health successfully. The senior leadership team benefits from accurate self-evaluation to help managers set challenging targets for the future in the detailed school development plan. Good arrangements for mentoring new teachers, supporting professional development and tracking pupils’ progress promote equality of opportunity well, for all staff and pupils. Equality and diversity are celebrated well and community cohesion is promoted effectively. The school has good links with local schools and with national groups, although links with communities overseas are limited. The governing body fulfils its statutory requirements and ensures that the school provides good value for money.

Safeguarding arrangements are good. The school’s has clear protocols and procedures for making sure pupils are safe and protected. Up-to-date risk assessments, effective recruitment procedures and regular staff training ensure that the school maintains pupils' safety. The school successfully engages parents and carers in their children’s education and provides plenty of information for them through, newsletters, bulletins and reports. The headteacher is accessible to parents and carers and follows up any concerns sensitively. Parent and carer comments indicate that they appreciate this and one wrote: ‘The headteacher is very approachable and extremely enthusiastic about the school. She always has a smile on her face.’

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	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

The school’s data show that children’s skills, knowledge and abilities are low when they first start, but they make good progress and achieve well in the pre-nursery, nursery and reception classes. A great many children are new to the English

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language on entry. Nevertheless, the majority of children are working within most of the expected goals, including reading and using language for communication, by the time they begin Year 1, although skills in writing and calculation are weaker than in other areas. Thus, the curriculum is rightly extended into Year 1 so that children can reach the expected outcomes before moving on to their studies of the National Curriculum.

Children settle quickly and play well together because caring staff provide them with a calm learning environment in which they are highly valued as individuals and are well supported. Teaching is good. Adults work together as a good team to engage the children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are particularly vulnerable or have complex needs. As a result, children enjoy learning and increase their knowledge of the world around them. They build effectively upon their basic early reading, writing and numeracy skills and develop well creatively and physically. Children’s files, known as ‘Learning Journeys’, are maintained well and contain plenty of photographic evidence and observational notes that record children’s good progress. Leadership and management are good because the leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage works closely with staff to monitor and develop the provision.

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 very large majority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire expressed their satisfaction with the education provided by the school. They feel that the school keeps their children safe and meets their particular needs. Parent and carer comments included praise for the headteacher and the staff, and confirmed that their children enjoy school. The few concerns raised by parents and carers were raised anonymously with the school, and the response taken into account in the inspection findings.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Meryfield 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 77 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 355 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	55	71	22	29	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	47	61	30	39	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	34	45	38	50	3	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	42	55	33	43	1	1	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	42	55	32	42	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	40	52	34	44	2	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	42	55	33	43	1	1	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)	29	38	40	52	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	34	44	39	51	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	35	45	32	42	6	8	2	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	35	45	37	48	2	3	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	35	45	35	45	0	0	3	4
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	46	60	30	39	1	1	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.



30 November 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Meryfield Primary School, Borehamwood WD6 4PA

Thank you for helping us to learn about your school when we visited you recently. We judged that you go to a good school. Here are some of the other things we found out.

- You make good progress from your starting points and achieve well by the time you leave at the end of Year 6, although some of you could do better in writing at Key Stage 1 and in mathematics at Key Stage 2.
- You behave well and contribute to the school and the local community well.
- You understand that healthy food and regular exercise are good for you.
- The teachers and the teaching assistants take good care of you and make sure that you are safe when you are in school.
- The headteacher and the deputy headteacher lead and manage the school well, and are supported effectively by the governors.

We have asked your school to improve a few aspects.

- Help you present your work better and improve your spelling, and to use your mathematics skills when you are investigating or solving problems.
- Plan more challenging activities for those of you who find learning easy and make sure that teachers tell you what to do next to improve your work.
- Provide greater links between subjects and with people who live in other countries.
- Help new leaders to develop their skills and the way they check on your progress.

You can all help too, by being careful to present your work neatly, working hard, and making sure you come to school every day in term time.

Yours sincerely

Anna Coyle
Lead inspector

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