

# St Meryl School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	117166
<b>Local Authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	379362
<b>Inspection dates</b>	7–8 December 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Norma Ball

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	225
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Bill Wales
<b>Headteacher</b>	David Smith
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	9 July 2007
<b>School address</b>	The Mead Carpenders Park Watford WD19 5BT
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<b>Age group</b>	3–11
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 12 lessons including a small teaching group withdrawn from class, observing a total of nine teachers. They also made shorter visits to classes to look at displays and observe individual pupils and groups at work. They met parents and carers informally during the inspection and held meetings with the headteacher, teaching staff, members of the governing body and pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised samples of pupils' work, teachers' planning, the school's systems for tracking pupils' progress, and documentation relating to management, curriculum and safeguarding. In addition, inspectors took account of responses to questionnaires from 75 parents and carers, 23 staff and 80 pupils.

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

- How successful has the school been in raising attainment in writing for all pupils, and improving achievement in mathematics for more-able pupils?
- Is assessment information used effectively across the school to plan challenging tasks for all groups of pupils to raise attainment consistently, especially in English?
- How rigorous and effective are leaders and managers, including the governing body and those staff new to their roles, in monitoring the work of the school to ensure that attainment is rising consistently?

## Information about the school

St Meryl is an average-sized primary school with a smaller than average proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals. The majority of pupils are White British and just over one quarter are from minority ethnic heritages. This is a similar proportion to that found nationally, but a larger proportion of pupils than average speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is lower than average. There is one Nursery and one Reception class in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The St Meryl Breakfast Club is managed by the governing body. The school holds national Healthy School status.

**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

St Meryl provides a good quality of education. Pupils are well taught, show an enthusiastic approach to learning and, as a result, make good progress. The curriculum provides a rich range of learning opportunities. One pupil summed this up in saying, 'We do fun lessons. They are really interesting and every day we learn something new.' Safeguarding arrangements are good, pupils know how to keep safe, and they have a good understanding of what is involved in leading a healthy lifestyle. Links with parents and carers are good and they are pleased with all that the school provides; one parent, typical of many, said, 'We are very happy with the school. My children enjoy it and are doing well.' Despite the school's good endeavours, attendance remains average because a few families do not assign a high priority to prompt and regular attendance at school.

Children settle quickly in Nursery and make a sound start to their learning. In Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils make good progress so that, by the end of Year 6, attainment is above average. Progress is accelerated at the end of each key stage and particularly in Years 5 and 6 where teaching is strongest. Progress in English, especially writing, is improving because the curriculum is adapted well to provide interesting writing experiences that capture pupils' imaginations. Opportunities to develop pupils' problem-solving skills are contributing to improved progress in mathematics for all pupils, including the more able. Pupils' progress is tracked carefully through the school, but the resulting information is not used well enough in some lessons to plan tasks that provide good challenge for all ability groups. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language make good progress because they receive well-targeted learning support based upon careful assessment of their needs.

The headteacher provides clear and effective leadership which unites staff as an ambitious team committed to improving the school further. Self-evaluation is accurate because all senior leaders and managers, including those new to their responsibilities, monitor the work of the school carefully. Accurate priorities for improvement are identified and are proving successful. The members of the governing body are supportive of the school and improving their skills rapidly. Development points from the previous inspection have been resolved well. Strong partnerships with external advisors and other local schools are used very effectively to support and extend provision. Sustained good-quality teaching and the setting of clear and ambitious targets mean that the school has a good capacity for further improvement.

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## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure a greater proportion of teaching is good or better by sharing existing good practice in using assessment information to plan consistently challenging work for all ability groups.
- Build upon the good links with parents and carers to improve attendance rates and punctuality for the few pupils who are frequently absent or late.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils achieve well during their time in school. They make good progress from their average starting point in Year 1 and leave Year 6 with above average attainment. Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They are attentive and especially enjoy class and group discussions to share ideas. The successful focus on improving writing is integrated well into lessons. For example, in a literacy lesson, pupils in Years 6 used their work on Sir Francis Drake's voyages of discovery to prepare arguments for an imaginary sailor to use for not going on the voyage. Sharing their ideas in groups initially, they then worked on their persuasive writing, making sure they used exciting words and developed their arguments clearly. Problem solving in a mathematics lesson in Year 2 enabled pupils to use their number skills well to solve word problems. Multiplication and division skills were developed well through tasks that presented pupils with good challenge and this contributed to their good progress. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities contribute well to lessons because work is adapted carefully for them. They receive good support and this fosters their independence and confidence. Pupils who speak English as an additional language make good and sometimes better progress because they are well supported and encouraged to be fully involved in lessons.

Relationships at every level are good. Pupils understand right and wrong and know that what they do affects others. They have regular monitoring duties and older pupils undertake a range of important tasks in school such as acting as reading buddies for younger pupils, school councillors and play leaders. They show a strong sense of responsibility and a desire to help others. Pupils understand clearly about being safe, including safe use of the internet. Healthy School status demonstrates their good awareness of what is important for a healthy lifestyle. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Other cultures in the school community are valued and pupils enjoy finding out about other faiths and ways of life in their lessons. Pupils' enjoyment of learning, good achievement and their good personal development ensure they are well placed to move to the next stage of their education and beyond.

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*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	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	2
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	3
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective is the provision?

Lessons have good pace, and interesting activities involve and motivate pupils well. Teachers have good subject knowledge and take care when marking pupils' work to ensure that clear guidance is given on how a piece of work can be improved. Teaching is strongest where assessment information is used sharply to plan tasks in lessons that stretch all ability groups to do their best and extend their skills. However, sometimes the same work is given to the whole class or does not match pupils' abilities closely, and this slows progress. Pupils are encouraged to assess how well they are learning, and individual targets in literacy and numeracy, which pupils say they find helpful, are used effectively in all classes. Underachievement is identified quickly. Teaching support staff are deployed well and this ensures all pupils, especially those who find learning difficult, receive good support and make good progress from their individual starting points. Pupils who speak English as an additional language are also well supported, work is adapted for their needs and they play a full part in lessons.

The school's strategies to improve literacy and numeracy are used well by teachers and are proving successful in increasing pupils' progress. The linking of curriculum subjects to provide interesting themes for pupils creates good opportunities to extend their skills in literacy and information and communication technology. The development of numeracy skills through other subjects is not as advanced. A broad and exciting range of visitors and out-of-school visits enriches the curriculum and brings learning alive. A visit to Hatfield House, for example, enlivened pupils' work on

<sup>1</sup> 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 Tudors. Out-of-school clubs and sporting activities are also greatly enjoyed by pupils. The Breakfast Club provides a stimulating, secure setting for pupils before school and a healthy breakfast. The role of the parent support worker is well used to support pupils and their families, especially by linking them with available community services. Drop-in sessions organised by the school nurse and prudent use of a wide range of external support agencies augment the good care provided by the school.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

## How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher works in a close and complementary partnership with the deputy headteacher. The leaders' strong ambition has sustained the school through the periodic absences of senior staff in recent years. Recently appointed senior leaders and managers have embraced their new responsibilities efficiently. Careful analysis of the strengths and areas of development for the school has led to the successful implementation of a range of important improvement strategies. All areas of the school's work are closely monitored. There is a shared drive to move the school forward and, in particular, to raise the quality of all teaching to consistently good or better by regular and rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning. Although some members are new to their role, the governing body has a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. It is working to improve members' skills so that they can balance the good support they provide for the school with incisive challenge and greater participation in strategic planning.

The promotion of community cohesion is satisfactory and pupils are helped to develop an appreciation of their own community. Not enough work has been done to provide pupils with a full appreciation of their future role as national and global citizens. The school promotes equal opportunities well, ensuring that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language achieve as well as their peers. Pupils are known and valued as individuals, and the school is free from discrimination. The learning environment is attractive and well resourced. The safeguarding of pupils' welfare is good and supported by clear policies that are efficiently integrated throughout all aspects of the school. All staff receive regular training to ensure they are alert to all safeguarding matters.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

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

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enter Nursery with skills and abilities similar to those of children of the same age. They are encouraged to become independent, to mix well, and to tidy away their toys. When tidying up after pretending to make fairy cakes in Reception, one girl said, ‘I have to tidy up nicely because I’ve been making little birthday cakes.’ She added wistfully, ‘Not real ones so I can’t eat them.’ Teaching is sound and children make satisfactory progress in their learning and, when they enter Year 1, their skills and abilities are in line with those expected for children of a similar age. A careful approach to helping children recognise letter sounds and then blend them to form words is used effectively by teachers to help develop early writing and reading skills soundly.

A satisfactory range of activities is planned for children to cover all areas of learning but the good resources are not deployed consistently to ensure these activities are always inviting and exciting to children. Opportunities are missed to make full use of the spacious outdoor learning area and, in particular, children have limited chances to use the large toys and so promote their physical development progressively. Staff work as a close and enthusiastic team. They meet regularly and work soundly with the acting Early Years Foundation Stage leader who also has other leadership responsibilities in the school. Children’s progress is monitored well both in their play and in their development of specific skills. The foundation diary for each child provides a valuable record for parents and carers of their children’s development.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	3



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Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

## Views of parents and carers

An average proportion of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire. The overwhelming proportion are pleased with all that the school provides. All are pleased that their children are safe, and they feel the school is led and managed well. Parents and carers also appreciate how well they are kept informed of their children’s progress and the support they receive to help with learning at home. They value their children’s enjoyment of school and their experience at St Meryl. A few parents and carers did not feel the school takes sufficient account of their concerns or suggestions. Inspection evidence indicates that the school works well to build good links with parents and carers and regularly canvasses their views. All staff are readily available to meet with parents and carers informally or by appointment. One parent summed up the positive views of others, saying simply, ‘A fantastic school with great staff.’

### Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Meryl 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 75 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 225 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	56	75	16	21	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	65	87	10	13	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	39	52	34	45	0	0	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	39	52	32	43	2	3	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	56	75	17	23	2	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	45	60	28	37	1	1	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	35	47	37	49	2	3	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)	35	47	33	44	0	0	2	3
The school meets my child’s particular needs	36	48	32	43	2	3	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	28	37	43	57	2	3	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	30	40	38	51	4	5	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	51	68	23	31	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	55	73	19	25	0	0	1	1

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 8 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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 December 2011

Dear Pupils

### **Inspection of St Meryl School, Watford, WD19 5BT**

Thank you for welcoming us to your school and for being so polite and helpful. We enjoyed talking to you and looking at your work. We saw how very excited you were about your visit to the theatre to see the pantomime and you told us how much you enjoyed it.

We were impressed to see how much you enjoy your lessons, and you told us you find learning fun because teachers make your lessons interesting. You get on together and behave well. You know a lot about being safe and healthy. We found that you make good progress in your time at St Meryl and you are well cared for by all adults. Your headteacher, other staff and the governing body work well together to make your school a happy place in which to learn.

You told us yours is a good school and we agree with you. We have suggested two things which would help to make your school even better.

- We have asked your teachers to share the good things they do to help you learn and to make sure they use what they know about how well you are doing to always plan lessons that give you work that is not too easy or too difficult.
- The school will continue to work with a few families to help ensure that all of you come to school regularly and on time so that none of you will miss important learning time.

You can all help by continuing to work hard and doing your best at school. It was a great pleasure to visit St Meryl and we wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Norma Ball  
Lead Inspector

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