

# The Meadows School

School Road, High Wycombe, HP10 0HF

**Inspection dates** 18–19 October 2012

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Despite significant improvement shown in recent results and rates of progress in both Key Stages 1 and 2, the school has still to show consistency in this improvement.
- While much good teaching is apparent in the school, some elements of teaching, such as in aspects of mathematics, need further attention.
- The provision for information communication and technology (ICT) has only recently been improved and pupils' skills are still developing.
- The quality of subject planning is not yet consistently good across the school.

### The school has the following strengths

- The new headteacher's ambition is really driving things forward and he has the support of a very dedicated staff and governors.
- The teachers' hard work is beginning to show through in improved rates of progress. Teaching assistants play a key role in supporting groups of pupils with their learning.
- Pupils' behaviour is good and they have a good awareness of safety.
- The school curriculum is lively and interesting and pupils learn well from opportunities to explore the local environment.
- Pupils get along very well together and are very respectful of one another's cultures and beliefs.
- The school enjoys the support of the vast majority of its parents.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 19 lessons or parts of lessons. Two of these were jointly observed with the headteacher.
- Inspectors heard pupils read and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors examined the 13 responses on Parent View, the government's website for parents' views of schools, and also the school's most recent survey of parent opinion.
- A discussion was held with a member of the local authority's advisory staff.
- A formal discussion was held with pupils.
- Inspectors examined progress data and other school documentation including safeguarding information.
- The lead inspector held a discussion with the Chair of the Governing Body.

## Inspection team

Peter Sudworth, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Maura Docherty

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This is a one-form entry primary school with eight classes. Pupil numbers are slightly below average although numbers have increased significantly from the Nursery upwards. Class sizes are still small in Years 5 and 6.
- Children begin the Nursery the term after their third birthday. Parents can opt to send their children to the Nursery either morning or afternoon and can also pay for additional time. The percentage of children transferring from the Nursery to the Reception class varies from year to year. Children begin the Reception class in the September before their fifth birthday.
- The school supports 12 per cent of its pupils at school action (around the national average) and a further 12 per cent at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs (above the national average). Six pupils have a statement of educational need.
- The proportion of the pupils from ethnic minority groups is around the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who join or leave the school at times other than the usual ones is higher than usual.
- The school meets the current government's floor standards, which set minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The headteacher is in his first year at the school having been appointed in January 2012.
- A higher percentage of pupils than nationally, approaching thirty per cent, are entitled to pupil premium, extra government funding for pupils who are entitled to free school meals and looked after pupils.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
  - providing more opportunities for solving problems and the investigating of number in mathematics
  - sharpening up pupils' mental skills and offering more challenge to able pupils at the start of mathematics lessons
  - improving pupils' ICT skills
  - providing individual targets for pupils from looking at their work and tracking their progress, so that pupils know what they must do to improve their learning.
- Ensure that the recent improvement in rates of progress and attainment in reading, writing and mathematics in both key stages is sustained.
- Enhance the overall quality of leadership in the school by:
  - assuring consistency in the quality of subject development planning with greater attention to improving progress and attainment and planning the steps to get there
  - ensuring that targets agreed during staff appraisal meetings can be successfully judged and measured and so be linked more effectively to salary.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Attainment on entry to both the Nursery and Reception classes is below expectations. Children make good progress in the Reception class and often reach average levels of attainment in the different areas of learning.
- Pupils have begun to show improved rates of progress and higher attainment. Results in 2012 were a significant improvement on previous years. Pupils in both key stages reached broadly average standards, rising from a below average trend. All Year 6 pupils reached the expected level in both English and mathematics. Significant percentages reached higher levels in both key stages. However, progress in mathematics requires improvement as pupils lack opportunities in problem solving and more able pupils do not do always do as well as they could in mental work.
- Higher than usual pupil mobility means changes to the composition of year groups through the school. Data analysis indicates that pupils generally make satisfactory progress over time. The Year 6 cohort 2012 made good progress. Progress in reading is supported well by good teaching including phonics (linking sounds and letters). Borrowing books each week from the school's library and support from parents at home also contribute.
- Different groups of pupils make similar rates of progress. The needs of pupils who are disabled and those who have special educational needs are identified early. Action plans for individuals are shared with parents so they can help at home. Specially planned work supports groups and individuals well.
- Pupils demonstrate sound communication skills. Opportunities for pupils to share views in class promote their speaking and listening skills. Occasionally pupils are very quiet when giving a response, making it difficult for others to hear. The value of contributions can then be lost.
- The school had old and unreliable ICT equipment until recently which did not assist the good development of the pupils' skills in ICT. However, the new suite provides good facilities for pupils to catch up. Year 3 pupils created their descriptions of an imaginary Roman god directly onto computers for their Roman studies, one writing, 'He has red, boiling, awesome, cool, laser-like devil's eyes....'

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- Teachers generally plan lesson activities effectively for different abilities, but introductions to mathematics lessons and mental work do not always challenge higher ability pupils well enough. Mental activities do not help develop pupils' mental calculation strategies sufficiently well.
- Staff have mutually respectful relationships with pupils and manage them well. Lessons proceed in a calm atmosphere which supports learning.
- Marking is generally good, with a blend of praise and comments for improvement, although it is not yet consistently good across the school. Pupils have an idea where they are heading with National Curriculum levels, but do not have precise written targets to aim for to help them improve their work.
- Teachers make good use of literacy in different subjects. In history a Year 6 pupil wrote as a child worker in Victorian times, 'My arms are ridiculously achy and my legs are exhausted from walking around so much.' Such opportunities to write imaginatively in different subjects help pupils to progress in writing. Good use of check lists for different styles of writing in Year 6 helps pupils know what they should be including.
- Teachers share the objectives for the lesson effectively and tell pupils how they can be successful in their tasks. Visual aids are used effectively. In Year 4, extracts from a video helped pupils understand the importance of the Nile to Egyptians.
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Children are immersed in a range of activities which develop their skills. Effective use is made of the spacious outside area, although the full learning potential of some outdoor activities is missed. There are good activities for their physical development.

- The teaching of reading is good. Staff have good skills in teaching letter sounds and helping pupils understand what they read. Year 1 pupils enjoyed a book in which they had to remember the characters in a story and later helped their teacher write them so that they understood what a 'list' was.
- Staff are beginning to use the facilities to help the pupils improve their computer skills further but routines for the start of ICT lessons can occasionally be slow. Teachers have yet to exploit fully the use of laptops in class.
- Staff question pupils effectively so that pupils have to give full answers. This supports their speaking and reasoning skills. Teaching assistants provide good help for teachers with small groups and individuals so that they understand their work. Teaching assistants contribute well to pupils' progress.
- Teachers make good use of subject vocabulary. Following their outing to the woods and river, the Year 5 teacher referred the pupils to their geography 'field notes' and spoke about 'meanders' and referred to 'acid' and 'alkalinity' in the water. Pupils absorb such vocabulary and give it back in discussion.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- Pupils behave well and enjoy their work. They concentrate well in lessons. When they partner each other in discussions they do so sensibly. Around the school, too, pupils are well behaved.
- The school works hard with the small number of pupils who have emotional problems to help them to improve their behaviour. Pupils are often polite and courteous. They hold open doors for one another and are helpful in the duties they undertake. In lessons, they listen well to the contributions of others and have good work attitudes.
- Attendance has improved and is now around the national average. The school has been successful in getting over to some parents the message that regular attendance is important to support progress. Punctuality has also improved and this means that pupils do not miss the important start to the first lesson.
- Pupils feel safe in school, and the behaviour log confirms that there is very little bullying and that behaviour over time is typically good. Pupils are aware of the different types of bullying but did not report any serious incidents of unkind behaviour.
- Pupils are also aware of how to keep safe out of school. They understand that they must not talk to or take sweets from strangers. They can describe how to cross a road safely and the dangers of electricity, such as not handling electrical items with wet hands.

### **The leadership and management requires improvement**

- Under the new headteacher's guidance this is clearly an improving school with capacity for further improvement. The priorities on the school development plan are the correct ones and focus on pupils' progress and attainment. However, not all subject leaders' action plans are rigorous enough in their focus on progress nor in the actions and timescales required to bring about improvements. Their own checking of teaching and learning is not yet extensive enough.
- The school has good links with other schools which help transfer arrangements at age 11 and promote inter-school events. It also has good links with parents. The headteacher's presence at the gate in the morning promotes good partnerships and means that immediate concerns can be dealt with. The parents' association is blossoming. A large number of parents attended the Year 3 assembly during the inspection.
- Safeguarding arrangements are good because staff are regularly reminded about child protection matters and pupils who may be vulnerable. Important documentation is up to date.
- Pupil premium money is used well for one to one tuition, group support, extra staffing and resources and helping the drive to accelerate pupils' progress. The gap in attainment between those for whom this extra finance is intended and other pupils is narrowing.
- Appraisal and performance management have been dutifully carried out but wording of objectives for staff has not always made it easy to see if they have been achieved. The new headteacher has identified this for the forthcoming round of appraisals. He has planned to make

the process meaningful and developmental for staff and to ensure that the objectives set are measurable against pay.

- The curriculum has recently been reviewed. It is developing well with aspects of different subjects linked together. During the inspection, Year 3 pupils studying the Romans wore togas for a day and made Roman bread with honey. Year 4 pupils visited a local wood, made shelters and studied leaves and trees. Such visits contribute well to pupils' spiritual and social development. Religious education helps pupils understand different faiths and cultures. Good use is made of writing in different subjects but there is limited attention to investigating and solving problems in mathematics. ICT is developing satisfactorily.
- Extra-curricular activities are good, with a wide range including sport offered. One club is for pupils who are particularly shy, and activities are planned to help their confidence and social skills.

■ **The governance of the school:**

is developing well. Members are beginning to challenge and ask questions and hold the school to account. While some members are more active than others, links with subject leaders help to keep them well informed. Financial oversight is good and pupil premium money well spent. The governors ensure that the school provides a healthy and safe environment for pupils and staff.

## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	110258
<b>Local authority</b>	Buckinghamshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	405276

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

<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>	172
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Michael Appleyard
<b>Headteacher</b>	Brendan Aspell
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	18-19 January 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	01628 521634
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