

Mere School

Springfield Road, Mere, Warminster, BA12 6EW

Inspection dates 7–8 November 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Determined and committed leadership has been successful in taking the school from satisfactory to good since the last inspection. The school's leaders have a clear vision and the necessary ambition for future improvement.
- A real sense of community exists throughout the school. Pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to learning are usually of a high standard. Good relationships between staff and pupils are a fundamental strength of the school. The children feel safe and take a genuine pride in their school.
- The quality of teaching is now consistently good throughout the school. On occasions teaching is outstanding. All year groups achieve well in both their academic and personal development. Results have substantially improved and Year 6 pupils have achieved above average standards in mathematics and in English. Teachers are well supported by committed and able teaching assistants.
- The school offers a wide range of educational experiences and opportunities both inside and outside of the classroom. The pupils are able to develop many different skills through activities ranging from archery and tag rugby to food technology and cooking.
- The evaluation of teaching and learning is good and there is a strong emphasis, by school leaders, on closely monitoring and managing the performance of all staff. Assessment and tracking systems now ensure that all pupils' progress is monitored closely and regularly.
- The governing body has become significantly more involved in both challenging and supporting the school since the last inspection. The work of the governors' committees is focused sharply and is having a strong impact on school improvement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough of the teaching is outstanding.
- Work in science, information and communication technology, history and geography is not yet consistently matched closely enough to the ability levels of individual pupils.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was undertaken with half a day’s notice.
- The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 20 lessons, including joint observations, and looked at pupils’ written work. Children from Years 1 and 6 were heard to read. Guided reading sessions involving older pupils were seen as well as lessons in phonics (the sounds that letters make) with children from Key Stage 1 and Reception.
- The inspectors held meetings with groups of pupils, members of the governing body, subject leaders, a representative from the local authority, the parental support advisor and members of the senior leadership team.
- The inspection team looked at a range of evidence which included: the school’s development plan; the school’s data for tracking the progress and attainment levels of all pupils; monitoring reports; curriculum and lesson plans; governing body documentation; and the work pupils were doing in their books.
- The school’s self-evaluation documentation was also scrutinised.
- The inspectors also met parents and carers informally at the start and end of the school day. They evaluated 54 responses from parents and carers to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and the 16 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Pupils’ behaviour was observed and the inspectors checked the school’s health and safety and safeguarding procedures.

Inspection team

Mark Anderson

Additional inspector

Joyce Cox

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average-sized one-form entry primary school set in a rural town. The school does not have or make use of any alternative provision.
- The vast majority of children come from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding, is broadly average.
- The proportion of pupils at school action, school action plus and with a statement of special educational needs is broadly average.
- Over the last two years the school has met and exceeded the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The number of pupils has remained relatively stable over the last three years.
- Since the previous inspection in February 2010 four new staff have joined the school and a new deputy headteacher has been appointed.
- The school is a training school for the Graduate Teacher Programme for the University of Gloucester and Dorset County Council. The headteacher is Chair of Wiltshire's Primary Heads' Forum.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve attainment and progress further by raising the quality of teaching to outstanding by:
 - ensuring all staff agree on what constitutes an outstanding lesson
 - sharing and celebrating best practice
 - ensuring that all lessons are delivered at a brisk pace and engage, inspire and enthuse all pupils.
- Extend the best teaching practice to all subjects, particularly to science, information and communication technology, history and geography, to ensure that all learning tasks given to pupils of different abilities offer them the correct level of challenge.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils join the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and understanding below the levels expected for their ages in social development and language and communication. Children settle extremely well into school and make good progress in all areas of learning as well as developing confidence and independence. In particular, they make great strides in their personal, social and emotional development, being taught to make decisions and build strong relationships with all their peers.
- Children continue this progress at both Key Stages 1 and 2. Results over the last two years reflect a clear upward trend and an acceleration in progress for pupils of all abilities, including those who are disabled and have special educational needs as well as those pupils eligible for the pupil premium. The pupil premium funding has been utilised very successfully to provide additional one-to-one support and its impact is seen particularly in the improvements in mathematics.
- The improvements in the pupils' progress have been secured through well-focused support and effective interventions delivered by a strong team of teachers and teaching assistants bent on ensuring equality of opportunity.
- In 2012, at the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment rose to above average in writing, reading and mathematics and they achieved well from their starting points. The school has recognised the need to ensure that tasks set for pupils in subjects such as information and communication technology, history and geography are consistently challenging so that all pupils achieve as well as they can at all times.
- The improvement in achievement is closely linked to the rigorous monitoring of pupils' progress. All staff have an accurate understanding of each individual's needs.
- Over the last two years, the percentage of pupils attaining above the nationally expected levels at the end of Year 6 in key subjects has markedly increased.
- The great majority of parents and carers who completed the online survey in Parent View believe that their children are making good progress.
- There are no significant gaps in between different groups of pupils, and those who have special educational needs make similar progress to all other pupils. Those eligible for the pupil premium make the same good progress as their peers.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching is good overall. This has been evident in the observations of teaching during the inspections and in the monitoring records kept by the school. All teachers are fully aware of the Teachers' Standards and use them effectively to inform their teaching.
- The new Early Years Foundation Stage Framework has been successfully introduced and has quickly become embedded. Staff have effectively adapted their planning and observations to comply with the new curriculum for this age group.
- The leadership of teaching and the management of teachers' performance are now rigorous. Weaknesses in the quality of teaching noted in the previous inspection have been eliminated and this is reflected in the consequent rise in pupils' achievement.
- Teachers have high expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving. Lessons are designed to stimulate pupils' interest. Year 5 children were given a fascinating insight into times gone by when they dressed up as Romans in togas! Most lessons are well paced and staff use information from the school's tracking system to ensure tasks are well matched to pupils' abilities in the majority of lessons. Occasionally, lessons lack a real sense of urgency and pace and as a result pupils are not as enthused as they could be.

- In-depth pupil progress meetings are held at the end of every term and ensure that any pupil who is making less than expected progress is identified and appropriate interventions are put in place as soon as possible.
- Teachers' relationships with all pupils are very good and children say that the staff are friendly and help them with their work if they have a problem. In the Early Years Foundation Stage the reaction of the children to the teacher's magical 'fairy dust' was wondrous! There is a genuine emphasis on teamwork and teachers and teaching assistants plan together and good practice is shared across year groups.
- The quality of marking is good and pupils say that teachers' comments are useful in helping them to improve their work. Pupils have appropriate targets and know when they are successful in meeting their learning objectives. The majority of older pupils understand clearly what they must do to move to the next level of learning.
- At Key Stage 2 the marking of the morning's work is undertaken at lunchtime which allows staff the opportunity to address any problems that have become apparent on the same day. Appropriate homework is set regularly and extends the pupils' learning outside of school.
- The scrutiny of pupils' books showed a good standard of presentation, handwriting and grammar. This clearly reflected the pride that pupils take in their work.
- Teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to develop their speaking, listening and social skills through the consistent use of 'talk partners' and the children collaborate well together. In the classroom teachers demonstrated good questioning skills and involved all of the children.
- The breadth of the thematic curriculum is a strength of the school. A cross-curricular approach is central and this was highlighted in an inspirational mathematics lesson based on converting miles to kilometres which included both French and an insight into European geography.
- The teaching of reading is good and is supported by daily phonics sessions in the Early Years Foundation Stage and at Key Stage 1. The school's library has been recently upgraded and redecorated. It is well stocked and provides a very comfortable reading environment. Each year group also has a 'class parent' who plays a key role in encouraging reading.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The school offers a welcoming and very safe environment for pupils, who say that they get on really well with each other and that they know each other well.
- A 'Positive Behaviour' policy is operated in school and in all lessons. The pupils are enthusiastic about reward systems which include Golden Time, reward stickers and achievement books which are recognised in a weekly celebration assembly.
- Pupils clearly enjoy and value their school and attendance is now above average. The school has substantially improved the level of attendance by celebrating good levels of class and individual attendance. The pupils move around the school calmly and quietly to ensure punctual and orderly starts to lessons. Pupils' attitude to learning ensures that very little time is wasted in lessons.
- There is a very small minority of pupils with behavioural issues who sometimes demonstrate inappropriate behaviour. The school's actions in addressing these isolated incidents are effective and appropriate. There were some concerns regarding behaviour raised by a very small number of parents and carers in their responses to the online questionnaire but these were not borne out by findings during the inspection.
- Over the previous three years there have been no permanent exclusions and only two short-term exclusions.
- There is an atmosphere of mutual respect in the school. Pupils show a high degree of courtesy and consideration for adults and one another. They understand and conform to the school's 'Golden Rules' which underpin the school's code of behaviour. Behaviour code posters are

prominently displayed. Pupils are aware of different kinds of bullying and the vast majority are confident that bullying will be dealt with. The school keeps detailed records of all incidents, however minor.

- Pupils are keen to take an active role in school life with the school council providing a voice for them. The wide range of clubs and activities ensures that, according to pupils, 'there is something for everyone'.
- Lunchtime provides a daily opportunity for the school to see itself as one, as all pupils eat at the same time in the spacious school hall. A 'family group' system with pupils of different ages having lunch together helps bond the pupils together.
- Older pupils say they enjoy the opportunities they have to look after the younger children.
- There are very few concerns expressed by parents and carers, staff and pupils about behaviour and safety.

The leadership and management are good

- 'We enjoy, we learn and we achieve' is the statement that underpins the vision that spurs the school onwards. The newly formed leadership team has the drive and ambition to enable the school to become the best it can be. The headteacher, staff and governors are committed to improving the school yet further. The leadership team works together most effectively and uses the outcomes of accurate school self-evaluation and the monitoring of teaching to set clear priorities for improvement. The role of subject leaders has been extended so that they are now fully accountable for their areas of responsibility and play an important role in evaluating teaching, learning and pupils' achievement.
- Staff work closely together as a team and their morale is higher than it has been for a number of years. They know their opinions are valued and their input essential. The school is committed to their continuous professional development together with targeted performance management. A good example of the effectiveness of professional development was a recent training day visit to a number of other schools to raise their awareness and understanding of high-quality teaching practice as well as different approaches. The school leaders have identified the need to build on this by establishing a clear and shared understanding of what constitutes outstanding teaching and learning and to share best practice across the school so that pupils' achievement accelerates still further. The school benefits from good support from the local authority.
- The curriculum provides all pupils, regardless of their abilities, with a good range of quality learning experiences and visits to places of interest. The curriculum has a strong impact on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The school has strengthened links with parents and carers and offers literacy and numeracy courses as well as employing a parent support advisor. An example of the level of support that the school receives from the community and its parents and carers was shown by the 150 volunteers who helped at the recent fireworks festival.
- Accurate and honest self-evaluation has enabled the school to successfully address a wide range of improvements since the previous inspection. These include the establishment of a comprehensive and accurate assessment and tracking system to measure pupils' progress, an improvement in the pace of learning and a rise in attainment. This demonstrates a real capacity to sustain high standards and continue on the school's journey of improvement.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governors now provide appropriate challenge and support for school leaders. They have a clear grasp of the quality of teaching and its relationship to performance management in relation to salary progression and promotion. The school's finances, including the allocation of the pupil premium funding, are managed well. The curriculum committee ensures that all governors understand performance data and how the school compares to other schools. The governors receive professional training and take advantage of opportunities to further develop their skills and knowledge. Working with other school

leaders, governors ensure safeguarding requirements are fully met.

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

Unique reference number	126263
Local authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	402389

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	201
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rachel Porter
Headteacher	Catriona Williamson
Date of previous school inspection	2–3 February 2010
Telephone number	01747 860515
Fax number	01747 861039
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