

Meadows First School

Stourbridge Road, Bromsgrove, B61 0AH

Inspection dates 15–16 January 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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.

- Pupils make good progress as they move through the school. They develop their skills in reading, writing and mathematics well and are well prepared to move on to their next school at the end of Year 4.
- Pupils with special educational needs, including those attending the autism base, are valued and given good support to do their best. They make strong progress and their self-confidence and social skills are nurtured.
- The school is calm and orderly. Pupils are proud of their school and conduct themselves well in lessons and at other times. Pupils are courteous, polite and keen to learn.
- Good attention is given to pupils' safety and personal well-being. Pupils say that adults are quick to respond to any worries they have. They are confident that they are looked after well.
- Teaching builds effectively on what pupils already know, understand and can do to promote good learning. Classrooms, and rooms used for group work, are welcoming places with attractive and interesting displays.
- Adults are highly professional and show respect for pupils of all abilities. Relationships among pupils are very positive. As a result, the atmosphere in lessons is supportive of learning.
- Leaders and managers, including governors, ensure that teaching results in pupils achieving well. They identify accurately what needs to be done to maintain the strengths of the school and to promote improvement. The budget is used effectively and financial planning is careful. As a result, the right action is taken to maintain a good education for pupils.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching does not always ensure that the pace of pupils' learning is sufficiently rapid and sustained to promote high achievement. Although some individual pupils make excellent progress, not enough realise their full potential.
- Insufficient attention is given to the development of children's writing skills in the Reception Year. Because they are not pushed on really quickly in this area, especially in the autumn term, progress in the Reception classes is not quite as good as in the Nursery or Years 1 to 4.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 20 lessons. Four of these observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher
- They listened to a sample of pupils reading and discussed pupils’ experiences of reading with them.
- Pupils’ books were scrutinised and records of pupils’ progress were examined.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils. Discussions with pupils also took place informally.
- Meetings were held with governors, the headteacher, deputy headteacher and other staff with significant responsibilities. Inspectors discussed teaching and pupils’ progress with class teachers.
- An inspector met with a representative of the local authority and spoke with a second local authority representative on the telephone.
- Account was taken of the 53 responses to Parent View, the online questionnaire for parents, and the 26 responses to the staff questionnaire. An inspector met informally with parents at the start of the school day.
- A range of documentation was examined, including school policies, the school’s own evaluations of its effectiveness and records of the checks made by school leaders on the quality of teaching.

Inspection team

Alison Grainger, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Tracey Kneale

Additional Inspector

Jennifer Taylor

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average sized primary school.
- Most pupils attending the school are of White British heritage although a few are from minority ethnic backgrounds. Nearly all pupils speak English as their first language.
- There are two classes in each of the Reception Year to Year 4. A Nursery class runs in the mornings only. Not all of the children who attend the Nursery transfer to Reception, and many children enter Reception without having attended the Nursery.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action and the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational need are broadly average.
- Specially resourced provision for pupils with special educational needs is located in the school. This base has 12 places for pupils on the autistic spectrum. Five of these places are for pupils on roll at this school and seven for pupils on roll at Parkside Middle School. The base is led and managed by the special educational needs co-ordinator from Meadows First School and is the joint responsibility of the two schools.
- The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium is below average. (The pupil premium is additional funding provided for pupils in the care of the local authority, pupils who are known to have been eligible for free school meals within the last six years, or who are members of families in the armed forces.)
- In addition to the school's own Nursery class, afternoon Nursery sessions are provided by an external company. This provision is inspected separately.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to outstanding so that pupils are given better opportunities to make continuously rapid progress and achieve their full potential by:
 - ensuring that teachers have ambitious, although realistic, expectations of the next steps pupils are capable of taking
 - making the best use of teaching assistants in class lessons
 - always making full use of the time available to maximise learning.
- Ensure that children in the Reception Year are given the necessary opportunities, support and challenge to get off to a quick start in developing their writing skills.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Children enter the Nursery and Reception classes with a wide range of individual starting points. A notable proportion of children begin school with development a little below that typical for their age. By the end of Year 2, pupils have made strong progress and attainment is above average. It rises further by the end of Year 4.
- At the end of Year 1, pupils are screened to assess how well they are using the sounds made by letters to read. The proportion of pupils reaching the level expected in the screening in the last two years has been above average. It was particularly high in 2013. Pupils make very good progress from the start of their time in the school in this aspect of reading. Even pupils who struggle because of their special educational needs are focused and determined in using letter sounds to read words.
- Many pupils enjoy reading and read a wide range of texts. Pupils' good reading skills help them with their work in a variety of subjects. They support them effectively, for example, in tackling worded mathematical problems in Year 3.
- Over the last three years, pupils have done even better in writing than in reading by the end of Years 2 and 4. Pupils make good gains in their basic skills, such as in using punctuation accurately.
- Competence in adapting writing for different purposes develops securely. Pupils in Year 2, for example, are engaged and interested when they write reports on how to stay healthy. They know that sub-headings are needed to flag up the specific focus of each paragraph. Year 4 pupils use short sentences and description effectively to create 'suspenseful stories'.
- Even though progress in writing is strong in the school as a whole, children make a slow start in this area in the Reception classes. Assessments of children at the end of Reception, and the evidence of their earliest work in Year 1, show that the majority of children meet the expected goal in this area by the end of the school year. Currently in Reception, children are moving on less quickly in writing than in other areas, such as reading, and have the potential to do better.
- Pupils' progress and attainment in mathematics have crept up over the years since the last inspection so that achievement is now good in this subject. In 2013, for the first time, attainment at the end of Year 2 was above average in mathematics. Pupils make steady gains in their understanding of number, shape, space and measures.
- Pupils attending the base make good progress from their starting points in their basic skills. Those with language difficulties gain in competence, for example, in putting together sentences. Pupils also move forward significantly in their ability to sustain involvement in activities. Other pupils in the school with special educational needs move on from their starting points at the same good rate as their classmates.
- Over the last three years, the attainment of the group of pupils supported through the pupil premium has been a little lower than that of others at the end of Year 2. These pupils do not, however, make less progress than others. The pupil premium is effectively used to provide additional support that speeds up progress.
- Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve as well as others in the same classes.
- Pupils participate well in physical education and sport. They understand the importance of exercise in keeping healthy. Involvement in physical exercise and team games supports positive attitudes, sharing of ideas and skills in working together in other lessons. It makes a good contribution to pupils' achievement.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Pupils' learning is good because teachers know what they need to be able to do or understand next. They ensure that lessons support pupils in moving towards these goals. Strong emphasis is given to the development of basic skills. Pupils' good ability to use the sounds letters make for

reading, for example, is a clear result of accurate teaching.

- In some lessons, although not enough, pupils' learning is exceptional. This very high quality of learning is achieved when expectations of pupils are very high but also realistic. Learning is moved on rapidly by instruction and activities that are sharply focused and purposeful, with every moment in the lesson used to the full.
- In an English lesson in Year 2, for example, pupils of all abilities maintained very good attention and their learning was rapid because of the clarity of the teacher's instructions and explanations. Each activity had a very clear purpose and lasted for the right amount of time to achieve its purpose and keep pupils fully involved. Pupils evaluated their learning very well and knew how well they were doing and what they should work to improve.
- Often, the resources used in lessons engage pupils well and provide a clear purpose for the activities. This is evident, for instance, in the use of well-chosen videos and sound effects to prepare pupils for writing tasks. Displays on classroom walls are often used effectively by teachers and pupils alike to support good learning.
- The use of real-life contexts for problem solving in mathematics involves pupils well. Pupils are often required to think carefully through problems and justify or debate their responses. This process deepens their understanding well, for example, as they get to grips with dividing by ten or a hundred in Year 4. Often, but not always, effective use is made of practical apparatus to help lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs develop mathematical understanding.
- Teaching assistants promote learning very well in some lessons by being proactive and checking learning around the class during whole-class sessions. These checks on learning ensure that individuals or groups get support or extra challenge quickly as needed.
- In a lesson in the Nursery, adults were deployed to observe children and to support the next steps in learning through the questions they asked. As a result, children developed their counting skills and recognition of numbers very well while threading keys onto a string. Language skills were also developed quickly as children were required to explain what they were doing with a variety of materials, scissors and glue to make snowmen.
- The contribution of teaching assistants to learning is strong in small group sessions targeted at the next steps of particular groups of children. This is an important factor in the good progress made by pupils with special educational needs.
- In the base, the good adult support is underpinned by high quality planning that takes account of each pupil. This, combined with the adults' sensitive approach, results in pupils listening to adults and to each other, maintaining involvement, and learning effectively. Sometimes, however, adults in the base do not ensure that pupils do the most they are capable of doing on their own and this prevents learning from being outstanding.
- There are several reasons why teaching in the school as a whole does not promote outstanding learning. In some lessons, the pitch of the instruction and activities is suitable for most pupils but does not push on the learning of the most able pupils. Sometimes, instruction or activities go on for longer than is necessary for fast learners, so that such pupils are repeating what they already know and can do without moving forward. This means that the time available for learning is not, on occasions, used well enough and so limits the progress the most able can make. In some lessons, teaching assistants are not used effectively. This is the case when, for example, they spend a large part of the lesson sitting with lower attaining pupils but not actively enough supporting their learning or checking on others.
- While much good learning takes place in Reception, teachers underestimate what children are capable of achieving in writing. Not enough focus is given to forming letters, and writing words, phrases, and simple sentences, especially at the start of the school year.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are smartly dressed, wear their school uniform with pride, and show good respect for the adults in school. They take good care of the environment and usually present their work with care. They follow instructions well, for example, moving quickly from the carpet to tables during lessons or turning to a partner to take part in paired discussions.
- Pupils seldom waste time in lessons and there is little off-task chatter. Occasionally, when an activity goes on for a long time, pupils find it hard to remain well focused so learning slows. Even so, pupils do not on these occasions disrupt the learning of others. All in all, pupils' attitudes to learning make a strong contribution to their good achievement. The above average attendance rate reflects pupils' enjoyment of school and enthusiasm for learning. Pupils say that they particularly like creative subjects and lessons in which their views are sought, such as 'circle time', when they sit together and talk about matters important to them.
- Behaviour in the dining hall is exemplary making lunchtimes pleasant social occasions. Pupils queue for service without any fuss and then sit and chat with their friends as they eat. Behaviour in the playground is very good. Pupils line up sensibly to enter the school at the end of playtime and move in orderly fashion through corridors and up the stairs as they return to their classrooms.
- Pupils respond positively to opportunities to take responsibility and to help others. They enjoy, for example, undertaking the roles of play leader or PE equipment monitor.
- Pupils attending the base have particularly good behaviour. They respond very positively and comply with the clear expectations of adults.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe is good. Pupils feel safe and are safe. They are confident that adults do not tolerate any acts of unkindness and that they have an adult to whom they can turn should the need arise. They understand the importance of respect for others and the different forms that bullying can take.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe, not only in school, but also when out in the community or using the internet.

The leadership and management are good

- Leaders, managers and all staff demonstrate pride in the school. Staff are pleased to be part of a team focused on promoting good learning and care for the well-being of pupils. All staff present themselves smartly and are good role models for pupils. The demeanour and professionalism of staff contribute much to pupils' positive attitudes to learning and good behaviour.
- The headteacher values the staff and develops them effectively. Succession planning is good. When it was known that a long-serving special educational needs co-ordinator would be retiring, the school developed another member of staff to take on this role. As a result, the current postholder got off to a flying start and is providing strong leadership.
- Leaders with key areas of responsibility, such as subject leaders, make a positive contribution to the development of teaching and the range of opportunities available to pupils. The two English subject leaders have kept themselves up to date with initiatives and have successfully led staff training. Training has, for example, made an effective contribution to the teaching of reading skills and the variety of opportunities pupils have for writing.
- Some areas of the school's work are not quite as effectively led as others. The school recognises that the combined efforts of two members of staff in leading English have been productive. There are plans in place to apply the same model to mathematics. Although improved since the last inspection, the leadership of mathematics has not moved forward at the same pace as that of English.
- The leader of the Nursery and Reception provision is relatively new in post. The school recognises that further work is necessary to develop teaching and the range of learning

opportunities in the Reception Year. While the school's self-evaluation is mostly accurate, the school has overestimated how well it has developed the teaching of Reception children, particularly in writing.

- Overall, across the school, the monitoring and development of teaching is secure. Performance management is used effectively and action is taken should any teaching dip below good effectiveness. The headteacher draws on a wide range of evidence in evaluating how well each teacher promotes pupils' progress. External consultants are used appropriately to check the accuracy of the headteacher's judgements.
- The school provides a good range of learning opportunities for pupils. Effective attention is paid not only to academic achievement but also to the development of creativity, enquiring minds, and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school is successful in helping pupils grow into caring, polite and responsible citizens. Links with a school in an inner city multi-cultural area, for example, help to prepare pupils for life in a diverse society.
- Use of the primary school sports funding has been carefully thought through. It is being used to provide specialist coaches who not only work with pupils but also develop the skills of the staff. It is also being used to increase opportunities for pupils to take part in competitive sport. Appropriate arrangements are in place to evaluate the effectiveness of the use of the funding, in particular, to check how well staff expertise has been developed.
- The local authority provides light touch support for this good school. It is, nevertheless, proactive and provides support in key areas identified by the school as being relatively less good. It has given support to develop teaching and the range of learning opportunities for Reception children.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are enthusiastic and committed to the school. They ensure that pupils are kept safe and that safeguarding arrangements meet current government requirements. Much is done by governors to communicate with parents and to seek parents' views. Governors provide support for leaders, but also challenge well when necessary. They ensure that the budget is used prudently. They have required, for example, that the primary school sports funding is used in a way that it is intended to have a lasting impact. Checks are made by governors on the use of the pupil premium funding to ensure that it is used for the pupils for whom it is intended and improves their progress. Governors know about the quality of teaching and are familiar with data on pupils' performance. Rigorous procedures have been followed for the headteacher's performance management. Governors make sure that the performance management of teachers is carried out effectively, so that good teachers are rewarded and any underperformance is tackled.

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	116662
Local authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	431544

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

Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	325
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andrew Lynch
Headteacher	Sue Hewitt
Date of previous school inspection	27 January 2009
Telephone number	01527 872508
Fax number	01527 836574
Email address	office@meadows.worcs.sch.uk

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