

# Meridian Community Primary School

Roderick Avenue North, Peacehaven, BN10 8BZ

**Inspection dates** 23–24 October 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Inadequate</b>	<b>4</b>
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Inadequate	4

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires special measures.

- Pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 make inadequate progress and leave the school with low standards in English and mathematics.
- Too much weak teaching has led to pupils' inadequate achievement over time. Consequently, significant gaps remain in current pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding.
- More-able pupils make inadequate progress. Too few pupils reach the higher levels of which they are capable.
- Lower-attaining pupils do not apply phonics well enough (knowledge of letters and their sounds) to develop their reading and writing.
- Leaders and managers are ineffective because they have not secured the improvements identified at the previous inspection, including raising attainment and improving teaching.
- School leaders do not check to make sure that various initiatives have improved English and mathematics teaching and learning across the whole school.
- The governing body is ineffective. Governors have not supported the school in its quest for improvement. They do not hold leaders to account. Many governors are new and have not received the training or support to carry out their role effectively.
- A minority of pupils do not attend school regularly enough.

### The school has the following strengths:

- Children achieve well in Reception because the teaching is good and the environment is stimulating.
- Staff morale is good and staff have a clear sense of purpose.
- Teachers are consistent in their effective approaches to making sure the school is calm and pupils feel safe.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 22 lessons; about a half of these were joint observations with the headteacher or deputy headteacher. They also heard a sample of pupils read from Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.
- Inspectors had discussions with pupils, looked at a range of their work and examined the school's data on pupils' attainment and progress.
- Meetings were held with the Chair of the Governing Body, other governors, senior leaders and teachers. A telephone conversation was held with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors studied a range of evidence including: the school's own data on pupils' progress and standards; policies and records relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance; monitoring records for the quality of teaching; the school's records for the quality of teaching and its relation to teachers' salaries and the recent external review of governance.
- Inspectors took into account the views of the 64 parents and carers who responded to the online survey questionnaire, Parent View, and the 28 responses to the staff questionnaire. They also spoke formally to a few parents and carers and took into account parents' and carers' letters, as well as comments made directly to Ofsted or the regional inspection provider.

## Inspection team

Eileen Chadwick, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Fiona Robinson	Additional Inspector
Roger Parry	Additional Inspector

## Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

Newly qualified teachers must not be appointed.

## Information about this school

- Meridian Community Primary is an above average-sized primary school in which pupil numbers have risen in recent years.
- The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage. A few are from minority ethnic backgrounds and very few are at early stages of learning English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action is average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also average.
- The proportion of pupils in receipt of pupil premium funding (additional funding provided for looked after children, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children of service families) is above average.
- A few pupils receive extra support provided by Peacehaven Speech and Language Facility.
- The school does not meet the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The headteacher took up post in January 2011 while the deputy and assistant headteachers joined the school about two years ago. A headteacher from another school who is a National Leader in Education (NLE) has very recently started to work alongside senior leaders for two days each week.
- The school has just emerged from a prolonged period where many teachers were temporary appointments, but very nearly all teachers now are permanent. Most teaching staff have been at the school for less than two years.
- There have been many changes to the governing body in recent years. A new Chair of the Governing Body and many other governors have very recently been appointed.
- There is a separately managed pre-school on the same site. The extended school services for the Peacehaven area, which are also run by a private business, are also held on Meridian's site. Pupils from all schools in the area, including Meridian, are eligible to attend the breakfast club, after-school club and holiday playschemes. These services were not inspected at this time and their inspection reports can be found on the Ofsted website.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that it is consistently at least good by:
  - ensuring teachers consistently have high expectations and good subject knowledge for teaching reading, writing and mathematics
  - ensuring teachers always make effective use of the time available in English and mathematics lessons, including during guided reading
  - ensuring that teachers always match learning tasks to all pupils' needs, especially the higher and lower-attaining pupils, and that tasks are stimulating and encourage pupils to contribute fully to lessons
  - ensuring lower-attaining pupils are heard to read more regularly, and also that reading records show parents and carers their children's phonics targets.

- Accelerate pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics by:
    - improving pupils' spelling and punctuation and the ability of lower-attaining pupils to write in sentences
    - ensuring pupils, particularly boys, consistently apply phonics when reading and writing and teachers' marking shows pupils how to improve their spelling by applying phonics
    - improving pupils' mental skills in mathematics, addressing the gaps in understanding and increasing opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical skills to real-life problems
    - accelerating the progress of pupils with special educational needs in reading, writing and mathematics
    - raising the attainment of pupils in receipt of the pupil premium and accelerating their progress.
  
  - Improve the leadership and management, including governance, by:
    - ensuring teachers are provided with the training they need to teach English and mathematics consistently effectively
    - senior and middle leaders rigorously evaluating the impact of initiatives for improving teaching in reading, writing and mathematics across the whole school and providing support where needed
    - ensuring the school development plan includes more subject-specific actions for improving English and mathematics
    - providing training for governors so that they can carry out their role effectively
    - working directly with those parents and carers who keep their children off school without good reason to ensure pupils' attendance and punctuality improve.
  
  - Ensure that the governing body holds leaders robustly to account for the school's performance, monitors the impact of spending on pupils' performance, including the pupil premium, and addresses the weaknesses identified in the recent, separate, external review of governance.
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## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is inadequate

- Achievement is inadequate. Pupils' learning and progress have been unsatisfactory in Key Stages 1 and 2 over time due to too much inadequate teaching. Learning and progress are currently insufficiently rapid to raise attainment from a low base. Inconsistencies in teaching, including some that is inadequate, are compounding pupils' earlier underachievement.
- National phonics checks show Year 1 pupils' reading skills have been broadly similar to national figures for the past two years. However, attainment at the end of Year 2 is not improving and is low, including in reading. This means pupils are poorly prepared for entering Key Stage 2.
- Year 6 pupils' attainment has been consistently low in English and mathematics for the last three years. In the latest 2013 tests, pupils' attainment was stronger in reading but low in writing and mathematics. However, boys' attainment in reading remained low. Consequently, the school is not doing enough to close the gaps, except for girls in reading, in order to meet the government's minimum expectations for attainment and progress.
- In the current Year 6, the legacy of underachievement means that pupils need to catch up on many literacy and numeracy skills. They are not doing so rapidly enough. Standards remain low and too few pupils attain expected and higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics. Throughout Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils are currently not progressing as well as they should.
- Although the school has improved its systems for teaching reading, including phonics, some weaknesses remain, especially for lower-attaining pupils. These pupils are not heard to read on an individual basis regularly enough and do not apply their knowledge of phonics well enough when reading.
- In Key Stages 1 and 2, lower-attaining pupils' individual reading books or class reading activities are often too hard. Pupils are not given enough opportunities to practise their sounds before reading their books to an adult. Pupils' home-school reading records do not include sufficient information about the key sounds and letters they should know, which limits parents' and carers' ability to help their children.
- Pupils' writing shows recent improvement in some classes but their spelling is often weak because they do not consistently apply phonics knowledge when writing. Punctuation and grammar weaknesses also impair the quality of writing for some pupils of all abilities. Lower-attaining pupils do not develop their ability to write in sentences well enough.
- In mathematics, too many pupils have lost ground in earlier years, especially middle-ability and more-able pupils, and are still not making the progress they should. Pupils often have gaps in their basic arithmetic skills which restricts their ability to apply their numeracy skills to other subjects. More-able pupils are often not challenged well enough, while work is sometimes too hard or not practical enough for lower-attaining pupils.
- Disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and those from minority ethnic groups make progress similar to that of their peers. Small-group teaching is provided where needed for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, including those receiving the specialist speech and language help given by Peacehaven Speech and Language Facility and for pupils who speak English as an additional language. Their attainment is limited by a legacy of past underachievement and some continuing inadequate progress in reading and applying phonics when reading and writing.
- Pupils eligible for the pupil premium make inadequate progress, in line with their peers. In the latest Year 6 tests, only a half attained the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics. In the current Year 6, these pupils' attainment is lower than that of other pupils in the school by approximately nine months in English and mathematics and also lower than that of their national counterparts. Pupils' attainment in Year 2 is also low in reading, writing and mathematics and about six months lower than their peers.
- Children achieve well in Reception. They start with skills and experiences well below the levels typical for their age, especially in early communication skills. Good progress in Reception begins

to lift their attainment although it is still below average on entry to Year 1.

### **The quality of teaching**

### **is inadequate**

- The quality of teaching is inadequate because over time it has not enabled pupils to make good progress. While there is some stronger teaching, it is still too inconsistent from one year to the next.
- Weaker teaching usually occurs because teachers' subject knowledge is insufficiently strong. The high number of staff changes means that few teachers have received specific subject training in both literacy and numeracy.
- Not all teachers show sufficient knowledge of teaching phonics, nor do they encourage pupils to apply phonics when reading and writing. On other occasions, teachers do not make the most effective use of lesson time and spend too long on oral work which demands little of pupils. In these lessons, not enough time is spent on developing pupils' reading, writing and mathematical skills.
- Guided reading takes place in every class but the quality is too variable. Pupils working directly with the class teacher have a positive learning experience that develops their reading skills. However, activities for the rest of the class are not always focused sufficiently on improving reading. Some pupils find it difficult to focus on the task when working independently.
- Sometimes pupils are passive and the pace of learning slows because teachers talk for too long and pupils have insufficient time for their independent work.
- Teachers' expectations are not consistently high enough, especially for more-able pupils in mathematics. There are not enough opportunities for pupils to apply mathematics to real-life problems or to engage in problem-solving activities which make them think for themselves. Teachers do not give enough attention to developing pupils' mental arithmetic skills.
- Although staff have up-to-date assessments of pupils' attainment, they do not consistently use these to match work to pupils' needs. Work is sometimes too hard for lower-attaining pupils or too easy for others, especially during overlong introductions to lessons.
- The use of teaching assistants is inconsistent. Some are deployed well, for example in the pastoral support for disabled pupils and for those who have special educational needs. However, their effectiveness is sometimes restricted by the type of activities that teachers provide.
- The atmosphere in classrooms is conducive to learning. Adults and pupils show mutual respect. Teachers usually explain lesson purposes well and ensure pupils have clear targets. Marking is too variable and does not give pupils enough feedback on how to improve their work, especially on how to improve their spelling by applying phonics.
- There is some good teaching in most year groups but it is only consistent across the Reception classes. In good lessons, teachers' good subject knowledge raises their expectations of what pupils can achieve and teachers successfully match work to the pupils' different needs.
- Children in Reception have many interesting things to do both inside and outside the classroom. They work well with adults and each other and activities are well matched to their needs. This was seen in a good phonics lesson when, through carefully matched tasks, staff ensured all children made good progress in learning and applying letters and sounds when developing early reading and writing skills.

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

### **require improvement**

- Pupils' behaviour and safety require improvement because pupils lose attention and begin to fidget when teachers talk for too long and they are not actively involved, and when work does not capture their interest or imagination.
- A small minority of parents and carers have reservations about pupils' behaviour and some expressed concerns about the school's procedures for dealing with incidents of bullying.
- The inspection team found that classrooms are calm and teachers consistently apply the same

systems for managing pupils' behaviour.

- Pupils' attendance has fallen and was below average in the last academic year. This is because a few pupils are persistently absent and are not punctual. The school works closely with the education welfare officer and is taking a more robust approach to improving attendance.
- Pupils get on well together in lessons and at play. They say that behaviour has improved in recent years and this is substantiated in the reductions of the number of exclusions.
- Pupils say that incidents of bullying are rare and, should any arise, the school is quick to deal with them. Inspection evidence indicates that procedures are secure.
- Pupils say they feel safe and a very large majority of parents and carers whose views are known agree with this. Pupils say that although there are occasional incidents of inconsiderate behaviour in the playground, these stem from boisterous play. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, for example, how to be careful when using the internet.

### **The leadership and management** are inadequate

- Leadership and management are inadequate because leaders have not effectively made the necessary improvements since the previous inspection. Pupils' achievement has declined further. Allied to weak governance, this means that the school does not have the capacity to bring about the essential improvements.
- High staff turnover in the last two years has adversely impacted on the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. Inadequate governance has exacerbated the school's difficulties as governors have provided neither enough support nor challenge during this very difficult period.
- Since this term, staffing has stabilised but there is much to do to ensure teaching is consistently good. For example, although individual staff have received training to meet specific needs, there has been too little training for strengthening mathematics expertise across the whole school.
- School leaders have not evaluated the impact of teaching on pupils' learning as strongly as they should. Lesson monitoring is regular. It has focused on issues such as class management but there has been less attention to helping teachers to understand the impact of their teaching on how well pupils of different abilities learn in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Middle leaders are keen and knowledgeable but are not taking a full enough part in helping to raise achievement in their subjects. They have not been involved enough in evaluating the impact of new initiatives on improving teaching across the whole school: for example for examining how consistently well phonics are taught and applied to reading and writing or how well guided reading is taught.
- The school development plan does not give sufficient attention to identifying specific actions for improving the curriculum and teaching for literacy and numeracy. However, it usefully shows leaders and staff clear milestones for judging the success for raising pupils' achievement, especially through assessment checks.
- The headteacher shows determined leadership and works closely with the deputy and assistant headteachers. They have introduced a suitable leadership structure for managing a large school. Senior leaders have had a positive impact on improving the teaching quality of those teachers who have been in post a year or more; for example, the many recently trained teachers who started last year.
- Performance targets are set and regularly reviewed so that staff know and understand how well they are doing. Pay is linked to the level at which teachers perform.
- The local authority is now providing high-level practical support. The school has welcomed the recent part-time employment of the experienced headteacher and the help she is providing. However, earlier support from the local authority did not stem the school's decline. The curriculum is inadequate and does not meet pupils' needs, including for lower-attaining and more-able pupils. The school does not meet its aim to provide equality of opportunity. It suitably promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and provides strong opportunities for sport and extra-curricular activities. The school has recently received primary



school sports funding and is using this to employ more sports coaches and to increase professional training for staff in physical education. It has clear plans to evaluate the impact of this work.

- In Reception pupils receive a good range of experiences. There is a good balance between adult-led activities and those that children choose for themselves.
- Safeguarding procedures and practices meet requirements.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body is ineffective. Governors are currently reorganising under a new Chair of the Governing Body and vice chair but are not yet in a position to fully support and challenge the school. Many have yet to receive training. There have been many changes in the membership of the Governing Body in recent years. Governors have not had a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses nor the systems to find these out. They have not developed systems to examine pupils' progress or to know how it compares nationally. Their ability to hold the school to account is weak. They have not found out about strengths and weaknesses in teaching and have had little involvement in school improvement planning and self-evaluation. They do not make the link between performance, teachers' salary progression and the targets being set by senior leaders to improve teaching. They have not known what the school is doing to tackle underperformance. They have not had systems to evaluate value for money or ensure financial resources are managed wisely. Governors do not have a detailed knowledge of how the pupil premium is spent or its impact on pupils' progress. They do not have systems to monitor the impact of spending on professional training for improving teaching. All these weaknesses were also identified in a recent external review of governance.



## 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>	114475
<b>Local authority</b>	East Sussex
<b>Inspection number</b>	426434

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>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	390
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Elisabeth Rumbold
<b>Headteacher</b>	Claire Westcott
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	14 November 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	01273 584212
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