

Meopham Community Academy

Longfield Road, Meopham, Gravesend, DA13 0JW

Inspection dates 25–26 November 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected as an academy	
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management	Good		2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good		2
Quality of teaching	Good		2
Achievement of pupils	Good		2
Early years provision	Good		2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils' achievement has been consistently above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 and at the end of Year 6 over the last five years.
- The proportion of pupils attaining the higher Level 5 in mathematics, in 2014 was significantly above the average. A greater proportion than average of more-able pupils attained the higher Level 6 in mathematics.
- In 2014, almost all pupils made at least expected progress above the national average in mathematics and reading. Progress in writing, while still above average, was slightly slower.
- The quality of teaching is mostly good and some of it is outstanding.
- Leadership and management are good because there are effective systems in place to secure consistently good performance above the average.
- Governors and leaders monitor teaching and achievement well to continue to raise standards. They know this needs to improve in writing.
- The curriculum is a major strength of the school. It gives pupils very rich and exciting learning experiences.
- The behaviour of pupils is good. They are polite and work well together in lessons.
- The safety of pupils is good because the systems in place for their safety are sound.
- Education in Reception is good. Children are well prepared for the move to Year 1.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Performance in writing across all year groups is not as good as it is in reading and mathematics.
- The most-able pupils are not stretched enough in writing and mathematics in Years 1 and 2.
- Groups in Key Stage 2 in Years 3 to 6 are not stretched enough in writing.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in 18 lessons. One observation was carried out jointly with an assistant Principal.
- Shorter visits to lessons were carried out jointly with the Key Stage 2 leader.
- The quality of learning and teaching over time in all subjects, and the progress pupils make over time, were assessed by scrutinising pupils' workbooks.
- Inspectors talked to pupils to find out from them what they think of their school, the teaching and the learning.
- They scrutinised school documents relating to all aspects of the school work, including policies to keep children safe, and to support disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs.
- Inspectors studied carefully the school's self-evaluation, its development plan and the governing body minutes.
- They talked to parents to learn if they think their children get a good education in this school.
- They met with the Chair of the Governing Body and with a director of the Multi- Academy Trust.
- Sixty responses to the online questionnaire Parent View were considered and responses to an anonymous questionnaire by 12 members of staff.

Inspection team

Mina Drever, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Faitha Maitland	Additional Inspector
Sue Cox	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a much larger than average primary school, with slightly more girls than boys.
- Children join the school's Reception classes, full time, at age five.
- Fourteen ethnic groups are represented. The largest is the White British group, making up four fifths of pupils on roll. The number of pupils representing each of the other ethnic groups is very small. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The number of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is much smaller than the average, about one tenth of pupils on roll.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for support through the pupil premium is very small and well below the national average. The funding is used to provide support for disadvantaged pupils, those in receipt of free school meals and children who are looked after. In 2013/2014, there were no disadvantaged pupils in Year 6.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in mathematics, reading and writing.
- The school, formerly known as Meopham Primary School, converted to Meopham Community Academy on 1 December 2010. When the predecessor school was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding overall.
- The school is in a federation with Chantry Community Academy in a Multi-Academy Trust of both schools. A Board of Directors runs the Trust. Each school has its own governing body.
- The Substantive Principal of this school is also the executive Principal of Chantry and Istead Rise Primary Schools.
- The school supports Istead Rise Primary School, which was placed in special measures by Ofsted at its last inspection in 2013, in developing improvement plans. The deputy Principal from Meopham Community Academy is Head of School at Istead Rise Primary School.
- Meopham Academy is an accredited Teaching School since September 2014, working with other schools jointly to provide teacher training with Thames Teaching Alliance.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards across the school:
 - by providing work which challenges all pupils, and particularly the more-able pupils, to aim for higher levels of performance by the end of Year 2 in writing and mathematics, and in writing at the end of Year 6.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Governors, directors of the Multi-Academy Trust, school leaders and teachers share a clear vision of the school's determination to strive for the highest standards of teaching and pupils' performance. They are supported in this vision by the vast majority of parents.
- The desire to provide very good education is seen clearly in the school's development plan, which is detailed and focuses very appropriately on each area of the curriculum. Each area and each action is evaluated for impact on learning, linked to pupils' achievement. Achievement in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good and the provision is effectively led and managed.
- The Principal has played a key role in developing the middle leadership of the school. By giving his staff delegated responsibilities, he has assured the school of a solid succession team.
- Key Stage and subject leaders have very good knowledge of their responsibilities and of their subjects. They take responsibility for checks on teaching and learning in their areas. Broader checks, both internal and by teachers from other schools, secure consistent achievement in all areas. School's leaders are aware that attainment across the school in writing is weaker than in reading and mathematics, especially for the most-able pupils. Achievement in phonics (the sounds that letters make) is also improving fast this year as a result of much better monitoring of its teaching and learning.
- Systems for checking the quality of teaching are well implemented. Targets for teachers are set with reference to the majority of pupils making more than expected progress. These are checked carefully against whole-school targets. Teachers' own professional developmental training is matched to raising achievement. There are effective systems in place to reward good performance through salary increase and to tackle weaker performance.
- The Principal manages a very rigorous data analysis system for ongoing results of tests. Pupils are assessed every six weeks. Teachers regularly enter progress data. They have a good knowledge at any one time of the progress point of each pupil.
- Equality of opportunity permeates attitudes to learning in all classes. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs display high levels of self-confidence in class discussions because their contributions are highly valued. The school's code of conduct, based on the values of responsibilities that go with rights, has a very positive effect on pupils' social and learning behaviour.
- The topic-based creative curriculum encompasses the National Curriculum, with new assessment systems in the process of being put in place. There is a rich array of subjects, interwoven with music, the arts and sports. Pupils gain a good understanding of other religions and belief systems through the religious education curriculum, but also through investigative study in topic work during which they visit theatres, art galleries and museums. They enthusiastically join the many clubs open to them in school.
- The curriculum is a strength of the school and very effectively motivates and interests the children. It is very successfully interwoven with activities and learning opportunities to effectively raise the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. This includes enabling pupils to learn about and understand the diversity of modern British society to encourage tolerance and harmony. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. At the core of the curriculum there is a drive for the emotional and cultural development of the pupils. This is achieved through music, art and sport.
- Pupils in receipt of the pupil premium grant are supported well in all year groups. The fund is spent judiciously and based on research findings on what works best for each individual pupil. Support programmes include accelerated reading programmes, play therapy for emotional development, and funding participation into clubs to build confidence and self-esteem.
- The sports funding is very well spent to the benefit of pupils' good health and improved attitudes to learning in sport. The school has recruited sports professionals – at the premier sports level – to give master classes to teachers once a week on teaching physical education. Participation in competitive sport has increased in areas such as Highland games and curling.
- The school is supported in the provision of good education by the directors of the Multi-Academy Trust. The directors approve promotional movement for teaching staff on merit, deal with conflict resolutions and visit the school both formally and informally, for example observing teaching and learning.
- Safeguarding meets statutory requirements and, as a result, pupils are very safe. Pupils are very well supervised, particularly when moving around the school.
- **The governance of the school:**
Governors work well with the school and keep a close eye on standards. They know that the teaching of writing needs improving and could explain clearly why the results of the phonics check dipped in 2014. They are well trained to understand government statistical data on children's performance. They were

instrumental, when the school became an academy, in developing the artistic and creative side of the curriculum and in focusing on the emotional development of the children. This, they consider central to the development of the whole child. They monitor the performance of the Principal and they check that any teacher's salary and promotional rewards are strongly linked to pupils' achievement. They insist that information on the progress of disadvantaged pupils is discussed at every meeting of the governing body and expect up-to-date information on how they are doing. They keep tight control of the school's budget, which always, for example, keeps an 'emergency fund' for unexpected events. They ensure that the school has in place appropriate statutory systems to keep children safe.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Children behave well in and around school. They walk in an orderly manner between lessons. They respond appropriately to adults' requests to make way to visitors in corridors and on pathways around the playground.
- These aspects of good behaviour are a result of precise procedures for dealing with unacceptable behaviour. These are based on 'rights with responsibilities'. Pupils are given four rights – for example 'the right to respect' – which is accompanied by 'the responsibility to listen, to speak politely and to be honest'. This attitude has a great impact on attendance, which is consistently above average. Pupils arrive promptly to lessons and ready to start their learning activities.
- Learning behaviour is good in lessons because of the strong curriculum. Pupils display an interest in learning for its own sake and take pride in challenging themselves. One boy said that he liked to see how far he could challenge himself in a mathematics lesson. Disruption to learning is very rare. If it happens, teachers deal with it very quickly and effectively.
- Pupils say that there is the occasional play-acting in the playground, but that incidents of bullying are rare. In general, behaviour is good because adults supervise the outdoor areas very well and because pupils take seriously the school's code of conduct. The school keeps accurate records of any misbehaviour. These show a steady decrease in reported incidents.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Effective measures are taken to ensure safety in all areas of school, for example in teaching pupils and informing parents on e-safety in learning.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and how to behave to ensure the safety of their peers. They have a very keen understanding of all forms of bullying, including homophobic or racial discrimination.
- Parents trust the school to keep their children safe. This is because they are familiar with all the important procedures put in place. The school publishes the essential policies online so that parents can access them easily.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is mostly good in this school and a small proportion is outstanding. It is well planned, full of fun and yet imbued with the message that learning is of the utmost importance. Pupils take this very seriously indeed. It is rare to see pupils distracted because teachers prepare topic-based learning that is fascinating as well as educative. As a result, pupils make good progress in lessons.
- For example, one class studying The Sixties had enjoyed very much researching what this era had meant to their grandparents who had lived with anti-war demonstrations and with the Beatles. Mature considerations were given to John Lennon's ideal of the world in his song '*Imagine*' and all pupils agreed that maybe this could not be achieved, except in an ideal world. This proved to be a special avenue for these young minds' moral and cultural development.
- The developing employment of reading and writing skills, and accurate verbal use of English, are expected in all areas of learning. Marking is done regularly using the school's clear and consistently applied policy. As children move into older year groups, they are taught peer-marking and to use the school's policy by showing their teachers that they have understood the written feedback.
- However, there is room for improvement, especially in the teaching of writing to higher-ability pupils across the school. Although oral discussions in class are accompanied by good questioning which allows pupils to think deeply about topics they are talking about, their writing suggests that they are not always expected to produce equally higher-level written responses.
- Reading is well taught. Guided reading is extremely well planned. Pupils know how to extract meaning

from texts, how to guess what might happen next, and how to describe characters in stories. As a result, pupils read for pleasure and also learn effectively how to obtain information from texts.

- The teaching of phonics has improved because of new systems put in place in September 2014 to monitor teaching and progress. As a result, pupils are making good progress and are on track to do much better in the 2015 phonics check.
- Mathematics is well taught, and sometimes it is very exciting indeed, especially in Key Stage 2 lessons. The more-able pupils are sometimes not challenged sufficiently in Years 1 and 2. Pupils enjoy challenging themselves in solving harder problems. Mathematics is used well as a cross-curricular learning tool, for example in using statistics in geography surveys.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Pupils achieve well over time from their different starting points. Over the last five years, achievement has been consistently above the average at the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.
- However, in 2014, there was a decline in the number of more-able pupils achieving the higher Level 3 in writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2, and those attaining the higher Level 5 in writing at the end of Year 6.
- In 2014, there was also a drop in the number of pupils reaching the average points in the phonics check. This drop was a result of staffing issues which have now been resolved. New stringent systems for monitoring the teaching of phonics and progress in learning are in place. Current pupils are on track to supersede the 2013 results.
- Children join the Reception classes below the level of progress typical for their age. They make good progress because teachers provide a rich learning environment and monitor children's progress very carefully and regularly.
- Current pupils across all year groups are making good progress. They are on track to achieve well because they are already making more than expected progress. For example, the average points reached after only six weeks, since September 2014, by Year 2 pupils in mathematics are equivalent to the higher level expected at the end of Year 2.
- In Year 6 in 2014, there were no disadvantaged pupils in receipt of the pupil premium. Those in this year's Year 6 are making progress similar to other pupils in their classes, and at about one grade better in reading, writing and mathematics than the national levels of similar pupils. There are no gaps in their attainment. For example, after six weeks, they are at the equivalent of Level 4 in mathematics. These pupils do well because the school supports them individually with very-well-thought-out programmes drawn from research findings on what type of support promotes learning.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs achieve well from their different starting points. Their attainment was above the average in 2014. This is because the school has in place effective systems of identification of needs so that appropriate support can be put in place. Individual education plans for these pupils are regularly reviewed at pupils' progress meetings and support adjusted accordingly. As a result, they make good progress.
- The attainment of pupils who speak English as an additional language is consistently above the average. Current pupils are making progress similar to other pupils. This is because they benefit, like all pupils, from good teaching strategies, especially in reading and mathematics. Like other pupils in school, their progress is slower in writing.

The early years provision

is good

- Children join the Reception class with development below that typical for their age, especially boys and in writing. By the end of Reception, they reach a good level of development and are well prepared for Year 1.
- In 2014, children achieved particularly well in physical development, personal and social education. Boys' achievement of at least the expected levels at the end of the Early Learning Goals was above the national average in communication and language, mathematics, understanding the world and expressive arts and design. However, development in writing was not as good as in other areas of learning for all children.
- Leaders and managers are clear about their responsibilities. They know well the educational requirements of Reception-age children and they provide the appropriate environment for children to develop into little adults. Leaders work well with parents who are involved in the assessment of their

children at all times.

- Children play very well together and very harmoniously. They share resources fairly and take turns politely. They are very well supported by adults in their development towards mature little citizens. The learning environment is colourful and exciting, and full of a huge variety of activities for children to learn to play by themselves and with other children.
- Adults ensure that children's learning progress is continuous, even when they choose their own activities. They follow the children's play with incisive questions, which are so well formed that they encourage children to talk about what they are doing. Thus, children's listening and speaking skills have plenty of opportunity for continuing development and the pupils make good progress.

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	136351
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	449336

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

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	436
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	A Sharrod
Principal	M Clinton
Date of previous school inspection	not previously inspected
Telephone number	01474 812259
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