

Meridian Community Primary School

Roderick Avenue North, Peacehaven, East Sussex, BN10 8BZ

Inspection dates 10–11 December 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	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.

- Determined, resilient leadership has driven rapid improvement, notably in pupils' achievement.
- Pupils' progress in literacy and mathematics has improved significantly. Disadvantaged pupils are catching up well with their peers.
- Teaching has improved since the last inspection. Much is good, and occasionally it is outstanding. This is because of well-targeted training and relentless monitoring by senior leaders.
- Marking and assessment are a strength of the school. Pupils are making better progress because teachers clearly identify how their work needs to improve.
- Behaviour is now good as a result of an effective system which is more consistently applied. Safety is good because of the high priority given to this by school leaders.
- Governance is strong. Skilled governors hold school leaders to account with relentless insistence and contribute well to the school's continuing improvement.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage is now good. This is because teaching has improved and children enjoy a wider range of activities.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is not yet all of consistently high quality. Teachers do not always challenge more-able pupils with hard enough work.
- The curriculum is not yet rich and varied enough to ensure that all pupils experience a sufficiently diverse range of cultures and backgrounds.
- There is still a gap, albeit narrowing, between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and their peers.
- The school's work with parents is at an early stage; it does not yet help all parents to support their child's learning strongly.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed a total of 18 lessons, several of them jointly with senior staff. In addition, inspectors reviewed a range of pupils' books with the deputy headteacher.
- Shorter visits were undertaken to some other lessons.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, subject teams and the early years leader. There was a meeting with the Chair of the Interim Executive Board and the consultant headteacher. Inspectors also met with a representative of the local authority. Inspectors talked with pupils in lessons and at break times and met with two groups of pupils.
- Inspectors observed the work of the school, including a visit to a celebration assembly for Years 2, 3 and 4. A number of documents were examined, including the school's action plans, safeguarding documentation, local authority notes of visits, lesson observation records and records of the performance management of staff.
- Inspectors reviewed 32 parental responses from Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. In addition, inspectors talked with parents at the start of the day and met with a group of parents from the school's parent council.

Inspection team

Catherine Anwar, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Barbara Saltmarsh

Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

Information about this school

- Meridian Community Primary is a larger-than-average primary school in which numbers are rising. There are now three classes in Reception Year.
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Only one in 10 pupils is from a minority ethnic background and few pupils are learning English as an additional language.
- There are fewer-than-average disabled pupils and those with special educational needs.
- A small number of pupils receive additional support from Peacehaven Speech and Language Facility.
- 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 and rising. Over a quarter of pupils are now eligible for free school meals.
- The school meets the current government floor standard which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The governing body was replaced by an interim executive board in spring 2014. At this point a new Chair was appointed. In addition, the local authority appointed a consultant headteacher who is a National Leader of Education who worked in the school for two days a week until September 2014. This support is now reducing.
- The extended school services for the Peacehaven area are 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 play schemes. In addition, there is a separately managed pre-school on the same site which is also run by a private business. These services were not inspected at this time and their inspection reports can be found on the Ofsted website.
- The school is part of the Lewes Haven Education Improvement Partnership Alliance.
- A consultant headteacher, who is the Director of Newick Teaching School, now supports the school for one day a week. This support was brokered by the local authority.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further raise the achievement of those pupils eligible for free school meals, particularly the more able.
- Expand the curriculum to include a wider range of cultural experiences for pupils.
- Ensure that all teaching reaches the standard of the best in the school by continuing to implement the robust schedule of training.
- Work more productively with parents to ensure that they are able to support their children's learning as well as possible.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The resilience and determination of the headteacher have resulted in significant improvement over a relatively short period of time. She has led staff with tenacity towards a clear understanding of what good standards look like and has been undaunted in the face of challenges along the way. Staff and governors are firmly behind her and pupils welcome the improvements in the school.
- A culture of high expectations and clear values permeates the school. A celebration assembly observed by inspectors affirmed the success of several pupils in Year 2 to the accolade of their peers and visiting parents. All opportunities are taken to praise and encourage pupils to learn well and to aim high. Pupils in Years 4 and 5 commented, 'Celebration assemblies are the best!'
- Pupils all subscribe to the school's ethos of mutual respect. They know right from wrong, and get on well with each other because they are continually encouraged to do so. Personal, social and health education ensures that pupils explore other faiths well. The school is deeply rooted in the local community. Pupils attend the local remembrance service and perform at the Christmas carol concert.
- Senior leaders share a firm commitment to embedding the highest standards of teaching. A rigorous system of lesson observations and work scrutiny informs self-evaluation, so that leaders know precisely which areas to focus on.
- Senior leaders' judgments about the quality of teaching are accurate. There is also evidence that coaching and support work with other leaders are having a positive impact. Newly implemented 'lead teams' for English and mathematics are contributing well to raising standards.
- Senior leaders deliver much high quality training for staff. This has had a positive impact on the quality of teaching, although there is still some inconsistency across the school. Not all teachers are yet as good as the best. Leaders recognise the need to ensure that new staff meet the standards required of them and are providing an intensive induction programme to this end.
- Pupil premium funding is astutely directed at meeting the needs of disadvantaged pupils. Senior leaders plan efficiently and review the impact of this funding sharply, changing support as required. This has led to an improvement in the achievement of these pupils.
- The sport premium funding is appropriately used. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 benefit from swimming lessons, and the school employs a sports coach to deliver a lunchtime 'fair play football' club. The school links well with a sports coordinator of a partner secondary school to develop teachers' skills in delivering physical education lessons.
- Appropriately, the school has focused on raising standards in literacy and mathematics and ensuring rapid progress in these areas for all pupils. The curriculum reflects this emphasis. Now that leaders have secured better achievement, they are rightly beginning to explore ways of expanding the range of the curriculum so that it provides a wider scope of cultural experiences for pupils and better prepares them for life in modern Britain.
- Pupils benefit from a variety of experiences outside the classroom, including art and drama clubs, music lessons, street dance, karate, netball club and a 'fair play football' club led by a sports coach. The school has useful links with a local bookshop. Regular provision of book samples and helpful sponsorship ensure that pupils are given access to regularly updated, high-quality texts. This promotes and improves pupils' reading. These activities provide well for pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development.
- Senior leaders track and monitor pupils' attendance and behaviour rigorously. This includes the very few pupils who sometimes attend off-site provision.
- A recently-introduced parent council gives parents the opportunity to contribute tangibly to the school's improvement. Parents welcome this development.
- Systems for managing teachers' performance are demanding. Targets are linked clearly to the school's priorities and leaders' sharp monitoring of teachers' work is resulting in more rapid progress from all groups of pupils.
- Leaders and governors share a strong commitment to ensuring equality of opportunity for all. Pupils report an intolerance of discrimination and understand the importance of respecting each other.
- The local authority has supported and challenged the school with alacrity. Regular visits to the school, in addition to the provision of effective training for staff, have assisted the school's rapid improvement.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet all statutory requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The interim executive board (IEB) was established in March 2014. The Chair directs its work well, making good use of the relevant experience of governors. Regular visits to school and meetings with

the headteacher ensure that the IEB is extremely well informed about the impact of the school's work. Governors know about the quality of teaching and how senior leaders tackle underperformance. They accurately analyse progress information, sharply review the impact of the pupil premium grant and other funding, and challenge school leaders relentlessly to achieve higher standards.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- When teaching is most effective, pupils' learning behaviour is exemplary. Pupils listen carefully to the teacher and to their peers, are eager to learn and work very hard. Pupils respond well to challenging questions, understanding that it is through making mistakes and exploring these that their learning will move forward more quickly.
- When teaching is less successful, pupils generally remain polite and compliant. However, where work does not challenge them well enough, or where a few teachers are less assertive in using the well-established behaviour system, pupils can occasionally become restless and fidgety. Even then, pupils learn well; their books show encouraging levels of progress.
- Pupils rightly take pride in their work and their presentation is of a high standard.
- Pupils' behaviour around the school is welcoming, polite and sociable. Pupils report that there are few instances of name calling or bullying, but that the school would respond immediately, and to good effect, if this happened. Pupils reflect on significant improvements in the standards of behaviour over time, and all know precisely what the school rules are and how they work.
- Parents express few concerns about behaviour in the school.
- The school's learning mentors work tirelessly to support pupils and families in improving pupils' attendance. Consequently, persistent pupil absence has reduced significantly and is now lower than the national average. Moreover, gaps in levels of attendance between disadvantaged pupils and their peers are closing quickly.
- Exclusions have reduced and are now lower than the national average.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- School leaders are assiduous in making sure that all safeguarding training is up to date and that all appropriate documents are recent and accurate. They closely monitor the behaviour and safety of pupils who sometimes attend provision outside the school, and this is good.
- Pupils report feeling safe in school, and that they know who to go to if they have a concern. They are able to discuss how to stay safe when using computers. They have a clear understanding of the different types of bullying, and advised inspectors that teachers would deal with bullying stringently as it is not acceptable. Incident records, positive responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View and discussions with parents confirm that parents agree their children are safe at school.

The quality of teaching is good

- Effective training and an insistence on high expectations ensure that teaching is improving quickly and now results in pupils making good progress.
- Teachers know their pupils well. Diligent, high quality marking and accurate assessment inform lesson planning and help teachers identify those pupils needing extra help. Pupils are given the opportunity to reflect on teachers' comments and to identify what they need to do to make better progress.
- The best marking makes a significant contribution to good achievement. One Year 6 pupil commented, 'My teacher's thorough marking shows me that she cares about my work. This makes me try even harder.'
- In the best lessons, behaviour is well managed, expectations are high and activities are interesting and challenging. Pupils commented that teaching had 'got much better'; likewise, parents appreciate the 'very strong' teaching in Year 6 in particular.
- Teachers' questioning is now used to good effect in many lessons. It makes pupils think more deeply, and helps them ask good questions of each other. Sometimes teachers' questions are still too superficial and do not check pupils' understanding deeply enough.
- The teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they make) has improved significantly. This is reflected in the dramatic rise in the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standards in phonics testing in Year 1

in summer 2014. It is now well above the national average.

- Better teaching in mathematics owes much to the effective training and support delivered by the local authority adviser. This has resulted in impressive gains in achievement; high proportions of pupils now make expected progress in mathematics and disadvantaged pupils are catching up quickly with their peers.
- There is evidence in pupils' books of regular opportunities for extended writing, a key focus for the school. This has brought about notable improvements in the accuracy and quality of pupils' work. The school's policy of basing much work around high quality reading books is also paying dividends in the standard of pupils' reading.
- Although more-able pupils are making good progress, they are not yet sufficiently well challenged in all classes or subjects. Nevertheless, a higher percentage of Year 6 pupils than nationally attained Level 6 in mathematics and in English grammar, punctuation and spelling in 2014.
- Leaders are working hard to overcome the impact of previously weaker teaching and frequent changes in teachers for some classes. Parents and pupils understandably reflect some dissatisfaction with previous, more turbulent staffing. It is encouraging that staffing levels are now much more stable; this is helping pupils to make better progress.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Pupils' attainment has improved significantly over the last year for all groups at both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. It is now in line with, or higher than, the national average. This is the result of successful improvement strategies.
- Pupils join Key Stage 2 with attainment that is typically lower than average. By the time they leave Year 6, they now attain test results that are average or above. The proportion of pupils attaining expected levels rose significantly in 2014, with notable improvements in writing and mathematics. Moreover, seven pupils gained the highest level in mathematics, a much higher proportion than is nationally the case.
- Progress at Key Stage 2 is now slightly better than schools nationally. This is a significant improvement from previous years and is a reflection of better teaching and more acutely targeted support for pupils.
- At Key Stage 1, pupils made significant gains in summer 2014. Achievement in reading, writing and mathematics is now above the national average, and shows an improving trend.
- The achievement of pupils eligible for free school meals is improving rapidly. Although they are still not achieving as well as their peers at Key Stage 1 and are still two terms behind them, they are catching up steadily. This is particularly the case in writing and mathematics. At Key Stage 2, disadvantaged pupils are two terms behind their peers in school and those nationally in mathematics, four terms behind in reading compared to other pupils in school and three terms behind other pupils nationally, and two terms behind their peers in school and nationally in writing. The very small number of more-able disadvantaged pupils do not yet achieve as well as they should. The school has promising plans in place to address this.
- The attainment of more-able pupils was above the national average by the end of Key Stage 1 in reading and writing, an improvement on the previous year. Standards are continuing to rise. At Key Stage 2, not enough more-able pupils made more than expected progress in writing or mathematics.
- Disabled pupils and those with additional needs are supported by effective, well-trained teaching assistants, appropriate external support and additional teaching. This is now resulting in swift improvements in the rates of progress made by these groups of pupils. For example, pupils involved in a bespoke mathematics programme made 17 months progress in only three months. Nevertheless, the school is aware that these pupils have not made good enough progress previously and is taking robust action to address this to maintain current gains in their achievement. The achievement of those few pupils who sometimes attend alternative provision is improving steadily.

The early years provision

is good

- Children now make much better progress from their starting points than was previously the case. The proportion of children reaching a good level of development is now in line with national expectations. Previously, less than a fifth of children reached this point.
- Similarly, there have been rapid gains in the proportion of children meeting national expectations in reading, writing and number; girls now achieve much more highly than the national average.
- Gaps remain between the achievement of boys and girls and between disadvantaged pupils and their peers. However, a rigorous focus on these groups means that these gaps are closing steadily.

- The new early years leader has wasted no time in evaluating the provision, amending action plans accordingly and further improving practice. She has astutely used her experience of Year 1 teaching to raise aspirations for children in Reception. Overall, teaching is now good or better, and newer staff are benefiting from a well-targeted induction and support programme.
- Children enjoy a wide range of well-planned activities. Teachers ensure that numbers and words are incorporated into play, and many children are able to talk confidently about what they are doing and learning.
- Children quickly learn to share with each other and to take turns. For example, inspectors saw children thoroughly involved in an obstacle course activity. They took turns sensibly, timed each other and worked out who finished most quickly by comparing times.
- Children's work shows clear evidence of the rapid progress the children make. As in the rest of the school, their books are frequently marked and detailed records kept of how well they are doing. This then informs how teachers support those who need extra help.

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	114475
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	446316

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	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	392
Appropriate authority	Interim executive board
Chair	Mr Ian Jungius
Headteacher	Ms Claire Westcott
Date of previous school inspection	October 2013
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