

Meredale Independent Primary School

Solomon Road, Rainham, Kent, ME8 8EB

Inspection dates

2–4 December 2014

Overall effectiveness

Good

2

| | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------|---|
| Leadership and management | Outstanding | 1 |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | Outstanding | 1 |
| Quality of teaching | Good | 2 |
| Achievement of pupils | Good | 2 |
| Early years provision | Outstanding | 1 |

Summary of key findings

This is a good school.

- Pupils make good progress in learning to read and write and in mathematics.
- Good and sometimes outstanding teaching ensures that all groups of pupils, including the most able and those who find learning difficult, make good progress. Systems for marking pupils' work and monitoring their progress are very effective.
- Outstanding teaching in the Reception class helps children make an excellent start in learning to speak, read and write.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons is outstanding; they have excellent attitudes to learning and are always interested to learn new things.
- The school provides a good variety of activities which capture pupils' interests and enable them to develop and use their reading, writing and mathematical skills across a range of subjects.
- The school's leaders, including the proprietor and executive schools' leader, have ensured that good quality teaching secures good achievement and progress.
- The new proprietor has already brought about significant improvements to the school in terms of resources and refurbishments. This has had a very positive impact on learning.
- Arrangements to keep pupils safe are robust. Pupils say that they feel safe and well cared for.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- Teaching assistants are not always fully involved in teaching and learning.
- Teaching and levels of achievement are not outstanding because training for teachers is not frequent enough and they have too few opportunities to share outstanding practice.
- High-ability pupils are not always provided with consistently challenging work.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) is not used to best effect across all subjects for all year groups.
- Pupils lose opportunities to take pride in their accomplishments and to share examples of excellent work because too little of their work is displayed throughout the school.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets schedule 1 of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended by the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out with one day's notice.
- The inspector observed 13 lessons taught by eight different teachers. He scrutinised pupils' work and held meetings with the headteacher, the proprietor and executive schools' leader, senior leaders, staff, parents and carers and pupils.
- The school's documentation was checked including schemes of work, teachers' planning, assessment records and records pertaining to safeguarding, welfare, health and safety. The inspector checked the school's compliance with the regulations for independent schools.
- The inspector considered 14 responses to Ofsted's Parent View survey and responses to questionnaires distributed by the school to parents and carers this month and to pupils in January 2014. The inspector took account of the views expressed in 10 questionnaires returned by staff.

Inspection team

Chanan Tomlin, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Meredale Independent Primary School is located in Rainham, Kent and provides full-time education for boys and girls from four to 11 years of age. The school was first opened in January 2005 and is located in a building that was originally built as a school.
- The school was purchased from Kinder Groups Ltd by its current owner, Busy Bees Holdings Ltd, in March 2014. There is no chair of governors or a governing board. The headteacher is accountable to an executive schools' leader who oversees the school's performance.
- The headteacher had a considerable teaching commitment until the beginning of this term; she now devotes all of her time to her leadership role.
- There are 61 pupils on role. Almost all pupils attend full time. Pupils come from a variety of ethnic backgrounds but around two thirds are White British. There are no pupils with a statement of special educational needs.
- There is a separately registered nursery which shares the premises with the school. The numbers of children entering the school from the nursery varies from year to year.
- Pupils transfer to a number of state and independent secondary schools at the age of 11.
- The school teaches all National Curriculum subjects with the addition of French. It uses off-site provision for swimming every week.
- The school was originally founded on Christian principles although it no longer has a particular religious ethos. The school's aims are 'to develop each individual child to their full potential both educationally and pastorally'.
- The school was last inspected in March 2009.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to outstanding so that pupils make more rapid progress by:
 - ensuring that teaching assistants are always fully involved in supporting teaching and learning
 - providing teachers with a wider range of good quality training and more opportunities to share outstanding practice.
- Raise pupils' levels of achievement from good to outstanding by:
 - ensuring that all pupils are always provided with consistently high levels of challenging work
 - ensuring that ICT is used to best effect across all subjects for all year groups
 - improving the school environment with more displays of pupils' work.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management

are outstanding

- Outstanding leadership and management have ensured that levels of achievement are consistently good in all subjects including English, mathematics and science. The headteacher no longer teaches and so is able to give her full attention to leading and managing. As a result, she has the time that she needs to focus on raising the performance of all staff. She does this successfully and has helped create a drive to raise levels of achievement to outstanding.
- Teachers with specific responsibilities are effective in their roles. They understand their roles well and work well together to benefit all pupils.
- Senior leaders set exacting goals for all staff. Teaching staff receive clear guidance on how to help all pupils achieve good results in all subjects. This has resulted in an atmosphere that is conducive to learning where all pupils thrive.
- Senior leaders utilise self-review very well. Their carefully considered self-evaluation document correctly identifies the school's strengths and areas that need to improve. This is closely aligned to the development plan which drives leaders' actions to raise standards of achievement for all pupils and groups of pupils.
- Leaders and managers have established excellent partnerships with external agencies to ensure that pupils always receive any extra support that they may need. They work with agencies well to ensure that pupils who are at risk of harm are well protected and safeguarded.
- All staff, including leaders and managers, maintain regular contact with parents and carers. Parents and carers say that they are always kept fully informed about activities in school and the progress that their children are making. One parent or carer called the school 'a family' and spoke warmly about the many school events that parents and carers take part in and the open communication that exists between parents, carers and all staff.
- Overall, the leadership of teaching is outstanding because the headteacher checks teachers' performance and effectiveness through regular lesson observations. These help them improve their teaching methods, the strategies that they use and the ways that they use resources. Lesson observations provide teachers with relevant goals to raise levels of achievement further.
- Teachers are provided with some training of a high standard, especially with regard to helping disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. However, some gaps remain: the school's development plan has as a priority the provision of more frequent training in a broader range of skill areas in order to raise standards of teaching and learning further.
- The school promotes the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils well. For example, pupils learn about spirituality through collective worship during assemblies and trips outdoors where they contemplate the wonders of nature. They consider moral issues during personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE), history, assemblies and through discussions with teachers.
- Leaders and managers ensure that pupils are very well prepared for life in modern Britain through learning about British culture, services and institutions effectively in subjects such as PSHCE and history and from trips such as an upcoming visit to a court of law.
- The school has improved the ways that pupils learn about other cultures and religions since the last inspection. This is accomplished through religious education where pupils learn about the world's major religions, history and 'cultural weeks'. For instance, pupils enjoyed a 'cultural week' on India when they dressed in Indian clothing, sampled Indian foods and listened to a talk about Indian weddings. As a result, pupils are interested in people from other cultural backgrounds and learn to appreciate diversity and equality. Although provision in this area is good, senior leaders are exploring ways of broadening pupils' experiences of other religions and cultures even further.
- The school enriches its wide curriculum with extra-curricular activities that capture pupils' interest and help them achieve well. These include music, dance, weekly swimming and a yearly residential trip.
- The premises and accommodation, including the outdoor areas, are very well suited to support the subjects taught. Outdoor areas are currently being extended and equipped to a high standard. All areas of the school are very well maintained and nicely decorated.
- The school meets the requirements related to the provision of information for parents and carers, and the complaints procedure includes all of the required details.
- **The governance of the school:**

Leaders and managers are strongly held to account for every aspect of their work by an executive schools' leader, who is the representative of the proprietor. As a result, they successfully generate a

drive for very high standards among all staff.

The school has improved markedly since it was purchased by the new proprietor last year. The building has been refurbished and redecorated; there is now an excellent range of computing equipment available to pupils and teachers; and the headteacher has more time for her leadership responsibilities. As a result, the school is very well placed to raise standards of teaching and learning further.

The proprietor and executive schools' leader are firmly committed to raising standards and to providing an excellent education for all pupils. They make sure that they are always kept fully informed about pupils' achievement and ensure that everything is done to overcome barriers to learning. They carry out their responsibilities with conviction and a sense of urgency, challenging senior leaders and providing them with high levels of support.

The proprietor and executive schools' leader are the driving forces that help senior leaders ensure good teaching that is consistently improving. This is accomplished through the effective management of teachers' performance.

The proprietor has ensured that leaders and managers have developed policies and procedures that help keep pupils safe at all times. The school has robust arrangements for the recruitment of new staff to ensure that they are safe to work with children. Safeguarding procedures fully meet statutory requirements.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils are proud of their school; they respect teachers, other adults and school property. They are very welcoming and courteous when people visit the school. Staff have succeeded in creating a calm, purposeful atmosphere where pupils enjoy learning and are very keen to make good progress. The impact of this is that achievement is consistently good and improving.
- Pupils feel part of the school community and contribute to the school by taking part in regular shows and events. The head boy, his deputy and captains appointed from each class represent their classmates and help bring about changes to the school. Pupils contribute to the wider community through fund raising for charity, such as for the local sheltered-living facilities during the Harvest Festival. These and other activities help pupils understand their responsibilities to each other and the community very well.
- Pupils try hard, as shown by their eagerness to take part in discussions and debates about the things that they are learning. For example, during a Year 1 literacy lesson, pupils discussed different pictures of Father Christmas with each other and with teachers and then wrote good sentences on their own to describe the pictures.
- Pupils of all ages play nicely together during breaks. They work very well together during lessons and this makes learning fun and exciting. For example, during a Year 5 physical education lesson, pupils practised sequenced movements, first in small groups and then as a whole class. They did this very capably, sharing ideas and working collaboratively.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and know where to turn if they have any problems. They learn about the different forms that bullying can take; the school has recently placed great emphasis on cyber bullying and the damage that it can cause. Pupils say that bullying is rare and when it does happen is dealt with effectively right away.
- Parents and carers feel that the school is a very safe environment for their children.
- Attendance since the last inspection has been average or above average; it is currently above average at 97%. The school day and lessons always start punctually.
- Pupils learn about respecting all people regardless of their ethnicity, religion or sexual orientation. The impact of this is that they are friendly and inquisitive about people that are different from them.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Good teaching ensures the good progress of all pupils in speaking, reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils are split into groups for English and mathematics and work is pitched appropriately to enable them to make good progress from their starting points, whatever their age or ability.

- Teachers very capably adjust the work as the lesson progresses according to how well the pupils are doing. For example, during a Year 5 French lesson when pupils revised numbers, animals and phrases, the teacher made sure that all pupils could say words and phrases competently before revising more difficult ones. The pace of this lesson was good, providing good levels of challenge for pupils of all abilities.
- Pupils' work is marked regularly and very accurately, with helpful comments so that they are always clear about what they have done well and what they could improve; this is a real strength of teaching. Pupils always understand the lesson objective and are marked according to how fully the objective was met. Pupils check their progress against their targets and improve the content of their work in response to teachers' advice.
- The teaching of less-able pupils is good in lessons, small groups and individually. The most able pupils are taught well throughout the school and make good progress. They work hard, so produce a good amount of high-quality written and mathematical work.
- Pupils are encouraged to work on their own and to help each other. For instance, during a Year 6 ICT lesson, after careful planning pupils created 'wikis' on their own but were very happy to help their friends if they needed advice or assistance.
- Teaching is good but not outstanding because teaching assistants are not always fully involved in teaching and learning. As a result, opportunities to support all pupils are sometimes missed.
- There is evidence of outstanding teaching in the school. However, teachers do not sufficiently share outstanding practice and have not yet had the training they need to always provide high levels of challenge for all pupils. Senior leaders acknowledge this and are taking steps to improve arrangements for training and the ways that teachers can learn from each other.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- All groups of pupils achieve well and make good progress, particularly in reading and mathematics. As a result, most pupils have reached or exceeded expected standards by the time they leave Year 6 and are well prepared for secondary school.
- Although pupils' progress in writing is good overall, it is not as rapid as in reading. The school acknowledges this and has well-developed plans to accelerate progress in writing.
- When children join the Reception class most have skills typical for their age. Throughout the year, they make exceptional progress in all of the areas of learning and development and are very well prepared to join the primary department.
- Pupils in Key Stage 1 achieve well and make good progress in all areas of learning, although not as at rapid a rate as in Reception. The most able pupils in Years 1 and 2 are confident readers and can work out unfamiliar words using their knowledge of letters and sounds.
- By the time they reach Year 3 almost all pupils' reading, writing and mathematical skills are above the level expected for their age because of the good progress they have made.
- Good progress continues in Years 3 to 6. As a result, almost all pupils who left Year 6 in 2014 made or exceeded the expected progress and attained above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils currently in Key Stage 2 read widely and well. They write interesting stories and personal accounts and their vocabulary, punctuation and spelling are accurate.
- Pupils in Year 6 take entrance tests for local grammar schools and success rates are high.
- Less-able pupils make good progress in writing and mathematics because they receive plenty of extra support in classes, which are grouped according to ability. They gain confidence and skills in reading through the extra individual support that they receive.
- In both key stages, more-able pupils are usually given appropriate levels of challenge through carefully planned work and activities, but this is not consistent through the school so they are not achieving the very high levels that should be expected of them. This is a contributing factor to achievement that is good but not outstanding.
- The school has excellent ICT resources. These include interactive whiteboards in every classroom and laptops for all pupils. ICT equipment is used well in subjects such as English and mathematics but is not used across all subjects effectively. As a result, pupils lose opportunities to improve their ICT and subject skills in a wide range of ways, resulting in levels of achievement that are not outstanding.
- The school is very nicely decorated with educational displays in classrooms and corridors. Many of the displays are created by teachers and do not contain examples of pupils' work. This is a missed

opportunity for pupils to take pride in their accomplishments and to share examples of excellent work.

The early years provision

is outstanding

- Almost all children join the Reception class after they attend the nursery that shares premises with the school. They start with skills that are at least typical for their age. During the Reception Year, all children make outstanding progress in achieving the early learning goals, achieving significantly above expectations.
- Leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are outstanding. Senior leaders ensure that children are always safe and very well cared for. Children in the setting develop a love of learning, they are always engaged in activities and consistently display excellent behaviour.
- Teaching is outstanding. Teachers plan and organise activities that help children make rapid and sustained progress in their learning. For example, during a literacy session, some children were looking at objects that start with 't' and writing the words on slips of paper. Other children were playing word matching games on their own laptops. Teachers helped children when they needed it but, for the most part, let them work on their own. Children were so engaged and interested that one boy called out, 'Teacher, this is challenging!'
- All children learn to count accurately, know the sounds that letters make, and can read and write simple words very capably. Teachers carefully record the progress that children make and use this information to plan activities with high levels of challenge. As a result, children achieve exceptionally well and make outstanding progress in all areas of their learning.

What inspection judgements mean

| School | |
|---------|----------------------|
| Grade | Judgement |
| Grade 1 | Outstanding |
| Grade 2 | Good |
| Grade 3 | Requires improvement |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate |

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Non-association independent school inspection handbook* which is published on the Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/140053.

School details

| | |
|--------------------------------|----------|
| Unique reference number | 134858 |
| Inspection number | 443479 |
| DfE registration number | 887/6007 |

This inspection was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as inserted by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

| | |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| Type of school | Primary day school |
| School status | Independent school |
| Age range of pupils | 4–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 61 |
| Number of part time pupils | 1 |
| Proprietor | Mrs Margaret Randles |
| Chair | N/A |
| Headteacher | Mrs Michelle Homer |
| Date of previous school inspection | 17–18 March 2009 |
| Annual fees (day pupils) | £5,400 |
| Telephone number | 01634 231 405 |
| Fax number | N/A |
| Email address | schooloffice@meredaleindependent.com |

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2014

