

# Meridian Primary School

Harbour Avenue, Comberton, Cambridgeshire CB23 7DD

## Inspection dates

8–9 December 2015

## Overall effectiveness

**Requires improvement**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- School leaders, at all levels, do not have a clear enough understanding of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school.
- There is not enough good or outstanding teaching to ensure that pupils make good progress in all year groups. As a result, teachers in Year 5 and Year 6 have to spend too much time covering work that should have been done previously, in order to close gaps in pupils' learning.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to write at length in English or in other subject areas. This has an impact on the standards being achieved in writing, and the progress that pupils make in subjects such as science, history and geography.
- Teachers do not use assessment well enough to understand what pupils know and what they need to do to move on in their learning. As a result, the work that teachers plan does not provide enough challenge to pupils.
- The quality of the school's curriculum requires improvement. School leaders have not ensured that pupils learn effectively in subjects such as science, geography and history.
- In too many year groups teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve, in terms of both presentation and standards, are too low.
- Children do not make enough progress in the early years. Teachers do not use their observations to shape and extend children's experiences in all areas of learning.

### The school has the following strengths

- Behaviour is good. Pupils enjoy school, are punctual and attend regularly.
- The teaching of reading is highly effective. Children develop a love of reading and many read widely and often. By the end of Key Stage 2, attainment in reading is significantly above the national average.
- Pupils are well cared for and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted effectively.
- Pupils make good progress in mathematics in Year 2, Year 5 and Year 6.

## Full report

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

- Improve leadership and management by:
  - ensuring that leaders at all levels, including governors, understand their role in monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching, learning and assessment
  - ensuring that regular checks are made on the quality of teaching and the work that pupils produce
  - holding teachers to account more effectively for the progress of pupils in their class
  - improving the quality of the curriculum, and ensuring that the agreed programmes of study provide challenge in all subject areas.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
  - ensuring that teachers in all year groups have high expectations of what pupils can achieve
  - making sure that all teachers make effective use of assessment information to plan work which challenges pupils of all abilities
  - providing more opportunities for pupils to write at length, both in English and other subject areas
  - ensuring that all teachers have relevant subject knowledge in mathematics and fully understand the requirements of the National Curriculum.
- Improve the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
  - ensuring that regular assessments are made of children's progress and that this information is used to plan learning activities that challenge children and help them to move on in their learning
  - ensuring that the learning environment is organised more effectively, and that routines are established to encourage good progress in all areas of learning.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management **requires improvement**

- School leaders have relied too much on the end of key stage results when forming views about the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. As a result, they do not have a clear understanding of the school's strengths, nor where there are weaknesses that lead to pupils making less progress than they should. The recently appointed headteacher has put plans in place to address this issue but it is too early to see the impact of this work.
- The school has not made good progress in the introduction of the new curriculum. Currently the level of challenge in subjects such as science, geography and history does not prepare pupils well for the next stage of their education.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development extremely well. It provides good opportunities for pupils to take part in sporting and musical events, and there are many educational visits including a residential trip for Year 5 pupils. Each year the school holds a 'Shakespeare week' and Year 3 pupils recently performed *Twelfth Night* at a Shakespeare festival.
- Pupils demonstrated a well-informed and mature understanding of British values. In discussion with one of the inspectors, pupils showed a comprehensive understanding of democracy. Pupils talked about the importance of tolerance towards people with different views. Attitudes to people of different faiths were also discussed and, in response, one pupil stated, 'We must avoid making stereotypical assumptions about people.'
- The school makes good use of the primary sport funding to provide an extended range of sporting activities, including inter-school sports. The funding has also been used to support pupils' involvement in the 'Change for life' programme, which encourages healthy living through diet and exercise.
- Parents are extremely supportive of the school. Recently, over £10,000 was raised to support the development of a new school library, which is now being used to enhance reading across the school.
- The local authority has provided light-touch support to the school over the past few years and has not, until recently, expressed any concerns about standards or the quality of teaching and learning. As with school leaders, the local authority has made judgements about the quality of education based on end of key stage results and has not been aware of the weaknesses that exist in some year groups.
- **The governance of the school**
  - Governors are regularly involved in school life and provide both challenge and support for school leaders. They have a good understanding of the standards that are being achieved at the end of each key stage and monitor important aspects of the school's work extremely well. For example, they have recently supported and challenged school leaders to improve and develop procedures and documentation relating to safeguarding, which had been found to be in need of urgent attention. However, the governing body has not been as successful in holding school leaders and teachers to account for the standards being achieved in each year group, or the quality of work in subjects other than English and mathematics. This is because governors have not been provided with relevant information about these areas. Therefore they have not been aware of weaknesses in certain year groups or in specific subject areas.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. School leaders, including governors, ensure that appropriate systems for safeguarding pupils are in place, well documented and regularly reviewed.

### Quality of teaching, learning and assessment **requires improvement**

- In too many classes, teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low. In these classes teachers often accept work that is of poor quality and does not match the abilities of the pupils that they teach. These teachers do not use assessment well enough to gain an understanding of what pupils can do. Therefore, the work that they set for pupils often lacks challenge, and pupils' progress across subjects is not as good as it should be. Where teaching is good, for example in Year 2, Year 5 and Year 6, teachers have to spend too much time filling gaps in pupils' knowledge. As a result, although outcomes at the end of Key Stage 2 are, in some areas, well above the national average, pupils are generally not achieving as well as they should.

- Although many pupils achieve good standards in mathematics by the end of Year 6, there are too many year groups in which the teaching of mathematics is not effective. In some of the lessons seen, during this inspection, teachers' subject knowledge was not good enough. In one lesson, pupils were asked to complete tasks involving equivalent fractions without fully understanding the concept that underpinned the work. This led to many pupils making mistakes that were not picked up. The work in pupils' books also showed that in many classes, weaknesses in pupils' knowledge and understanding often go unchecked and errors are often repeated as a result.
- Teachers do not have high enough expectations regarding the presentation of work. The quality of handwriting is not good enough and, too often, teachers accept poorly presented, untidy work without comment.
- Pupils are articulate and use language confidently to express their ideas and opinions. However, this competence is not always reflected in their written work. Pupils do not develop positive attitudes towards writing in the same way they do towards reading. This is because writing is not taught systematically and pupils are not given enough opportunities to write at length or for different purposes. As a result, they do not develop their stamina for writing and too few pupils have developed the skills needed to become a successful writer by the time they leave Year 6.
- The teaching of reading is good. Pupils enjoy reading and, during their time at Meridian Primary, they develop into competent, confident readers. Many children start school with a good understanding of books and stories. The teaching of phonics (the sounds that letter make) is effective and by the end of Year 1 the percentage of pupils passing the phonics check is well above the national average. Good progress continues across Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. Many older pupils develop good reading habits and read widely and often.
- The work of teaching assistants is effective. They provide good support for pupils with special needs. They are also proficient in delivering learning programmes to pupils who have fallen behind in their learning. They work with pupils individually and in small groups, planning and delivering the work, and giving pupils helpful feedback.
- Teaching is most effective in Year 2, Year 5 and Year 6. In these classes, teachers use questioning well to establish what pupils know and to challenge them to think harder. Pupils in these classes make better progress, as expectations about what they can achieve are high and the work provides a good level of challenge for the vast majority of pupils.

## **Personal development, behaviour and welfare** is good

### **Personal development and welfare**

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- All of the parents who responded to Parent View said that their children are happy in school, well looked after and safe. A very large majority say that pupils are well behaved and that they would recommend the school to another parent.
- Pupils' social and emotional development is extremely well catered for. As a result, pupils enjoy school, quickly develop good relationships with other pupils and the adults who teach them and become confident, happy learners.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and are regularly taught about different aspects of personal safety. Older pupils said that messages about how to stay safe when using the internet are 'drilled into us'. Parents say that the school provides a caring and nurturing environment.

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Behaviour in lessons is calm and purposeful. Pupils respond quickly to instructions. Pupils told inspectors that there is never any disruption in lessons and this reflected the behaviour seen during the inspection.
- Pupils enjoy school. They attend regularly and are rarely late.
- Pupils work hard in lessons but their efforts, and their positive attitudes to learning, are not always reflected in the quality of presentation in their books.

## Outcomes for pupils

### require improvement

- Most children start in the Reception class with levels of development which are above those typically found. At the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, an above-average number of pupils achieve a good level of development. This broadly typical rate of progress continues across Key Stage 1 and by the end of Year 2, outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics are just above the national average.
- Progress across Key Stage 2 is inconsistent. In Year 3 and Year 4 pupils do not make good progress, particularly in mathematics and writing. Teaching is more effective in Year 5 and Year 6. At the end of Key Stage 2 in 2015, attainment in reading and mathematics was significantly above the national average.
- Pupils do not make good progress in writing across the school. Although the vast majority of pupils are competent writers by the end of Key Stage 2, too few attain the higher levels which many are capable of. Pupils rarely write at length or for different purposes. Teachers seldom provide helpful advice to pupils about how to improve their written work. This limits both progress and attainment.
- In subjects such as science and history, pupils are rarely required to record their learning in reports or extended recounts. The quality of work in these subjects generally lacks challenge and does not prepare pupils well for the next stage of their education.
- Pupils make good progress in reading. Phonics is taught effectively and an above-average percentage of pupils pass the phonics check at the end of Year 1. Pupils are encouraged to read regularly and older pupils read widely and often. They make good progress in developing their reading skills as they move through the school. Attainment in reading, at the end of Key Stage 2, was significantly above the national average in 2015.
- Disabled pupils, and those who have special educational needs, are well supported in their learning and make good progress from their various starting points.
- Most-able pupils progress at a similar rate to their peers. Their attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 is above the national average but should be even higher.
- There are too few disadvantaged pupils in each year group to make a reliable comparison of their attainment and progress with other pupils nationally and within the school.

## Early years provision

### requires improvement

- School leaders do not have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching, learning or assessment practices in the early years. As a result, they have not been able to ensure that the provision is good and that all children learn as effectively as they could.
- Teachers and other adults make regular observations of children and the activities that they are involved in. However, these observations are not used well enough to assess what the children are capable of doing. As a result, the activities which are planned for the children, particularly during the periods in which they are able to choose their learning activities, do not always provide appropriate levels of challenge to engage all children and help them to learn. During these periods some children also get boisterous, as routines are not fully established and expectations are not fully understood.
- Children start in the Reception class with skills, knowledge and abilities which are above those typically found. By the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, a higher than average number of children achieve a good level of development. Although this represents good progress for some children, others do not move on quickly enough in their learning. Nevertheless, by the time they start in Year 1, most children are generally well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Children enjoy school. They are kind and considerate towards each other when working together, or with teachers and other adults, and show good attitudes to learning.
- Children are confident and articulate and many are extremely able. During this inspection one of the children explained to an inspector the difference between a caravan and a campervan saying, 'One is towed and one has an engine inside.' Another child was able to write numbers accurately to 100.

- School leaders have developed good systems for ensuring that there is a smooth transition between home and school. This involves staff visiting children in their home, observing them at their playgroup, and providing opportunities for children and parents to visit school. These arrangements help children to settle into school life quickly.
- The school provides a safe and secure environment for children to learn in and play together safely. Staff receive appropriate training and school leaders have ensured that all safeguarding requirements are met.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	110626
<b>Local authority</b>	Cambridgeshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10001030

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.

<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>	214
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Chris Westgarth
<b>Headteacher/Principal/Teacher in charge</b>	Carole Etchie
<b>Telephone number</b>	01223 262423
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.meridian-school.com">www.meridian-school.com</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:info@meridian-school.com">info@meridian-school.com</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	7–8 November 2011

## Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils, for whom the school receives additional government funding, is well below average.
- The vast majority of pupils are White British.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 6.
- The headteacher started at the school in September 2015.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 12 lessons. Three lessons were observed jointly with senior leaders. They also observed other aspects of the school's work including an assembly.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and other middle leaders. They also met with members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils to discuss life at the school. They also listened to pupils read, and discussed reading and other aspects of school life.
- Inspectors spoke with parents before school and also considered the 50 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. They also considered 20 questionnaires completed by staff.
- Inspectors scrutinised documentation relating to the school's safeguarding arrangements, and records relating to behaviour, attendance, and the quality of teaching and learning.

## Inspection team

Paul Tomkow, lead inspector

Clare Fletcher

Nicholas Rudman

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Ofsted Inspector



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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
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